ONLYIAS
BY PHYSICS WALLAH

UPSC WALLAH

ANCIENT INDIA

COMPREHENSIVE LEARNING SERIES FOR
PRELIMS AND MAINS

ONLYIAS BY PHYSICS WALLAH

UPSC WALLAH

ANCIENT INDIA

COMPREHENSIVE LEARNING SERIES FOR PRELIMS AND MAINS

EDITION: First

Published By: Physicswallah Private Limited

Physics Wallah Publication

ISBN: 978-93-6034-023-0

Mobile App: Physics Wallah (Available on Play Store)

Website: www.pw.live

Youtube Channel: Physics Wallah - Alakh Pandey
UPSC Wallah
UPSC Wallah - Hindi Medium
PSC Wallah - UP Bihar
MPSC Wallah

Email: publication@pw.live

Rights

All rights are reserved with the Publisher. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission from the author or publisher.

In the interest of the student community:

Circulation of soft copy of Book(s) in PDF or other equivalent format(s) through any social media channels, emails, etc. or any other channels through mobiles, laptops or desktop is a criminal offense. Anybody circulating, downloading, or storing, a soft copy of the book on his device(s) is in breach of the Copyright Act. Further photocopying of this book or any of its material is also illegal. Do not download or forward in case you come across any such soft copy material.

Disclaimer

A team of PW OnlyIAS experts and faculties with a deep understanding of the subject has worked hard for the creation and curation of this book.

While the content creators, editors and publisher have used their best efforts in preparing these books. The content has been checked for accuracy. As the book is intended for educational purposes, the author shall not be responsible for any errors contained in the book.

The publication has designed the content to provide accurate and authoritative information with regard to the subject matter covered.

This book and the individual contribution contained in it are protected under Copyright Act by the publisher.

(This Book shall only be used for educational purposes.)

PREFACE

A highly skilled professional team of PW ONLY IAS works arduously to ensure that the students receive the best content for the UPSC exams.

A plethora of UPSC Study Material is available in the market but PW ONLY IAS professionals are continuously working to provide the supreme quality study material for our UPSC students.

From the beginning, the whole content team comprising Content Creators, Reviewers, DTP operators, Proofreaders and others are involved in shaping the material to their best knowledge and experience to produce powerful content for the students.

Faculties have adopted a new style of presenting the content in easy-to-understand language and have provided the team with their guidance and supervision throughout the creation of this book.

PW ONLY IAS strongly believes in conceptual and fun-based learning. PW ONLY IAS provides highly exam-oriented content to bring quality and clarity to the students.

This book adopts a multi-faceted approach to master and understanding the concepts by having a rich diversity of questions asked in the examination and equip the students with the knowledge for this competitive exam.
The main objective of the study material is to provide short, crisp, concise and high-quality content to our students.

BOOK FEATURES

- Holistic coverage of topics, strictly as per exam syllabus
- One-stop solution for subject wise coverage
- Intensive use of Maps, Diagrams, Flowcharts and Timelines for quick understanding and revision
- Thinking Points in and as ‘Ignite Your Mind’
- Updated with latest current affairs and data

CONTENTS

1. Early Ancient India 1-14
2. Harappan Civilization 15-27
3. The Vedic Period (c. 1500 BCE - 500 BCE) 28-41
4. Mahajanapadas (c. 600 BCE - 300 BCE) 42-54
5. Buddhism 55-70
6. Jainism and Ajivikas 71-78
7. Mauryan Empire (324 - 187 BCE) 79-94
8. Developments During 200 BCE - 300 CE 95-106
9. The Satavahanas 107-114
10. Sangam Age 115-123
11. The Guptas 124-138
12. The Vakatakas of The Deccan 139-142
13. Age of Regional Configuration 143-161
14. Ancient History Chronology 162-170

Early Ancient India

1

INTRODUCTION

The term 'history' finds its origins in the Greek word ***'historia,'*** which means "***inquiry***" or "***knowledge acquired by investigation***." It encompasses the examination of the past, shedding light on significant events that have shaped and influenced human experiences. History is categorized into **pre-history, proto-history, and history.** Prehistory pertains to events occurring before the invention of writing, commonly represented by the three Stone Ages. Defining proto-history poses challenges as it holds various connotations. Generally, it refers to the period between prehistory and history, characterized by the absence of developed writing within a culture or civilization. Although undeciphered, the script of the Harappan civilization is included in proto-history due to its mention in Mesopotamian writings.

Similarly, the Vedic civilization from c. 1500–600 BCE, with an oral literary tradition but lacking written records, is considered a part of proto-history. Archaeologists categorize Neolithic and Chalcolithic cultures as part of protohistory.

The study of the past after the advent of writing and the exploration of literate societies through written and archaeological sources form the **domain of history.**

- The historical and cultural identity of human settlements in India extends back to prehistoric times.
- **Robert Bruce Foote** played a crucial role in the early comprehensive study of Indian prehistory, discovering the **Pallavaram handaxe**, perhaps the first Paleolithic tool in India.
- **Sir Mortimer Wheeler** also made significant contributions, enhancing our understanding of prehistoric cultures in India.
- The Indian Stone Age is classified into three categories based on geological age, stone tool types, and subsistence base:

Old Stone Age	Palaeolithic Age	5,00,000–10,000 BCE
Late Stone Age	Mesolithic Age	10,000–6000 BCE
New Stone Age	Neolithic Age	6,000–1000 BCE

ERAS

- **The Era of the Kaliyuga (3102 BC)** was usually used for religious dates and rarely for political events.
- **The Buddha Era (544 BC)** was in use in Ceylon from an uncertain date. Often used for religious purposes.
- **The Vikrama Era (58 BC)** was traditionally founded by a king called Vikramaditya, who drove the Sakas out of Ujjain and founded the era to celebrate the victory.
- **The Saka Era (78 AD)** was, according to tradition, founded by a Saka King who occupied Ujjain 137 years after Vikramaditya. Kanishka may have founded this era.
- **The Kalachuri Era (248 AD)** was perhaps founded by a small Traikutakas (Trikuta) dynasty.
- **The Gupta Era (320 AD)** was probably founded by Chandra Gupta I.
- **The Harsha Era (606 AD)** was founded by Harshavardhana of Kannauj and was popular in Northern India for a century or two after his death.
- **The Lakshmana Era of Bengal (1119 AD):** It is said to have been founded by King Lakshmana Sena.

INDIAN HISTORY

- It is the river Indus which gave India its name. The Indians knew this river as Sindhu, and the Persians, who found difficulty in pronouncing the initial S, called it Hindu. From Persia, the word passed to Greece, where the whole of India became known by the name of the western river.
- The ancient Indians knew their subcontinent as Jambudvipa (the continent of the Jambu tree) or Bharatavarsha (the land of the sons of Bharata, a legendary emperor). With the Muslim invasion, the Persian name returned in the form of 'Hindustan' and those of its inhabitants who followed the old religion became known as 'Hindu'.
- The ancient civilisation of India differs from those of Egypt, Mesopotamia and Greece, in that its traditions have been preserved without a breakdown to the present day. India and China have the oldest continuous cultural traditions in the world.
- William Jones's initiative led to the founding of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784, with Jones himself as President. He translated Shakuntala, Gita Govinda and the law book of Manu into English.
- Charles Wilkins translated the Bhagavad Gita and Hitopadesa into English.
- Max Muller, who had a Sanskrit name, Moksha Mula, wrote two books- **"India, What Can It Teach Us?"** and **"Biography of Words and Home of the Aryas"**. Max Muller also edited 'The Rig Veda' and also another book called 'Sacred Books of the East'.

- James Prinsep interpreted for the first time the earliest Brahmi script and was able to read the edicts of the great emperor Ashoka.
- In 1862, Alexander Cunningham was appointed to the post of Archaeological Surveyor of India. Cunningham was known as the father of Indian archaeology.
- Archaeology is the science which enables us to dig the old mounds systematically, in successive layers, to form an idea of the material life of the people.

CONSTRUCTION OF INDIAN HISTORY

Methods for Construction of Indian History

Various dating methods play a crucial role in archaeological investigations, providing insights into the chronology and cultural evolution of ancient civilizations. These methods are:

- **Radiocarbon Dating Method:** This method helps in measuring the decay of carbon in organic materials over time. By analyzing the loss of carbon, archaeologists can estimate the age of the artefacts or remains being studied.
- **Dendrochronology:** This dating technique involves counting **the number** of **tree rings** in **wood.** The annual growth rings in trees serve as a natural timestamp, allowing researchers to establish a timeline for events or artefacts associated with the wooden materials.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

What are the methods employed by archaeologists to date ancient sculptures and artefacts?

Sources of Construction of Indian History

Material Remains

- **Numerous material** remnants left by ancient Indians, such as stone temples in **South India** and brick monasteries, serve as reminders of their construction activities. However, a significant portion of these remains are concealed in scattered mounds throughout the country.
- In the arid climates of western Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and northwestern India, **antiquities** are better preserved. Contrastingly, in the **humid regions** of the **middle Gangetic basin** and deltaic areas, implements suffer from corrosion, and detecting mud structures becomes challenging.
- Exploration has unveiled cities established around 2500 BC in northwestern India. The recovered material undergoes scientific examination, such as radiocarbon dating which establishes the time period of materials remaining. **Climate** and **vegetation history** is deduced from residue examination, notably through **pollen analysis.**
- Based on this, it is proposed that agriculture existed in **Rajasthan** and **Kashmir** as early as **6000 BC.** The scientific analysis of metal artefacts reveals their nature and components, helping to locate the source of the metals.

Literary Sources

A. Vedic Period (1500 BC to 600 BC)

Information about the Vedic period comes from **Vedic literature**. Scholars have divided the Vedic period into the early Vedic period and the later Vedic period.

The word 'Veda' comes from the root 'vid', i.e., to know. It is specifically applied to a branch of literature considered to be Shruti (which can be heard) and have been trsnsmitted orally for many centuries.

- **Rig Veda:** The Rig Veda means, the Veda of praise. It is purely a religious work and most of the hymns are all invocations of the Gods.
- **Sama Veda:** It consists of hymns taken from the Rig Veda and set to tune for singing. It is called the 'book of chants' and the origins of Indian music are traced to it.
- **Yajur Veda:** It is the Veda of formulae consisting of various mantras for recitation and rules to be observed at the time of sacrifice.
  - The two royal ceremonies of 'Rajasuya' and 'Vajpeya' are mentioned for the first time in this Veda.
- **Atharva Veda:** It was compiled by the sage Atharva, a non-Aryan. It is the Veda of formulae, charms and spells to ward off evils and diseases. It throws light on the beliefs and practices of the non-Aryans.
- **Brahmanas:** The Brahmanas are prose commentaries on the four Vedas. The subject matter is ritual. There are a total of 18 Brahmanas, the most important of which is the Satapatha Brahmana.
- **Aranyakas:** These are forest books which were composed in the forest and were meant for study in the forest. They deal with mysticism, the symbolism of sacrifice and priestly philosophy.
- **Upanishads:** The word Upanishad means **'to be seated at the feet of the Guru to receive the teaching'**. There are a total of 108 Upanishads, of which 13 are most prominent. The Upanishads dwell on the 'Atman' and 'Brahman', and focus a lot on the philosophy about life, universe, self, body sacrifice, etc.

B. Pre-Mauryan Age

Brahminical Literature:

- It consisted of the 'Vedangas' or the limbs of the Vedas, whose study was necessary to understand the Vedas properly. The Vedangas were written in the form of 'Sutras' ,i.e., a condensed prose style intended for memorization. The Kalpa sutras are divided into three classes: **Srautasutra**, **Grihyasutras**, **Dharmasutras**
- Four minor Vedas called **'Upavedas'** came to be written based on the Vedic literature.

- **The Upvedas are the following:**
  - Rigveda - Ayurveda
  - Samaveda - Gandharva veda
  - Yajurveda - Dhanurveda
  - Atharvaveda - Shilpa Veda

Buddhist literature:

It consists of the Pali canon in the form of three pitakas: Vinaypitaka, Abhidhammapitaka, and Suttapitaka.

Jain Literature:

It was written in **Prakrit**. Earlier in Jain literature, there was a set of 14 books called **Purvas**. They are now lost. 12 Angas were written, based on 14 Purvas.

Foreign Authors:

1. Herodotus wrote **'Historica'**. It talks about the trade relations of India with Persia.
2. Aristobolus wrote **'History of the war'**. He came to India along with Alexander.

C. Mauryan Period (321-184 BC)

- **Kautilya's Arthasastra:** It is the most important literary source of the Mauryan period. It is a book on political economy. It was written in Sanskrit.
- **Megasthenes's Indica:** Megasthenes was the Greek ambassador of Selucus Nikator to the court of Chandragupta Maurya.
- **Indian Buddhist Literature:**
  - Jatakas reveal a general picture of socio-economic conditions of the Mauryan period.
  - Digha Nikaya helps in determining the influence of Buddhist ideas on Mauryan polity.
- **Ceylonese Chronicles:** Mahavamsa and Dipavamsa
- **Tibetan Buddhist Sources:** Books such as Ashokavadana and Divyavadana

D. Post Mauryan Period

1. **Sangam period:** Sangam literature was composed of three assemblies and was poetic.It was produced over three to four centuries. Prominent works include Ettutogai, patupattu, Padinenkilkanakku, Silappadikaram, Manimegalai, and Sivaga Sindamani.
2. Patanjali, a great grammarian wrote the Sanskrit book **'Mahabhasya'** in the 2nd century BC.
3. Manu, in the around the time period between 2nd century BC to 3rd Century AD written the book **'Manusmriti',** which is the most famous dharmashastra.
4. In the post-Mauryan period **Asvaghosha** wrote Buddacharita, Saundarananda, Sariputraprakarana, Vajrosuchi, Sraddhotpada, and Gandistotragatha.
5. Foreigners' books in the post-Mauryan period relevant to India:

   (1) Periplus of the Erythrean Sea: Written in Greek by an anonymous writer between 80 and 115 A.D. It describes the Roman trade in the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the Indian Ocean. Mention is made about various Indian ports.

   (2) Ptolemy's Geography: Written in Greek in about 150 AD. It also mentions the flourishing trade between India and the Roman Empire in the post-Mauryan period. Mention is made about various Indian ports.

   (3) Pliny's Naturalis Historia: The book is written in Latin. Pliny offered a lot of detail about India, which isn't always correct, but his views do more than simply present the basic bones of history, and help us get a sense of how intimately Indian culture and trade were being recognised.

E. Sources in the Gupta Period

Secular Literature

(a) **Kalidas:** He was the court poet of Chandragupta Vikramaditya II. He was a great poet and dramatist. Considered as Shakespeare of the East. His works include:
- **Abhijanasakuntalam:** Love Story of King Dushyanta and Shakuntala, whose son Bharatha became a famous ruler. **William Jones** translated this book into English and it filled the romantic imagination of Europe.
- **Malvikagnimitram:** It is the Sanskrit play written by Kalidasa in the 5th-century CE. It narrates the love story of King Agnimitra, the Shunga Emperor at Vidisha. Agnimitra was the son of Pushyamitra Shunga, the founder of the Sunga dynasty.
- **Reghuvamsa:** Speaks of these found victories of Rama, and may indirectly refer to some Gupta conquests.
- **Kumarasambhav:** Deals with the courtship of Shiva and Parvati and the birth of their son Skanda.
- **Meghadutam:** Lyrical poem containing the message from the love-lon yaksha to his wife, pining across the northern mountains in Alaka.

(b) **Sudraka:** Wrote the Mrichchakatika (the little clay cart), the plot of which centres around the love of a poor Brahmana Charudatta for the wealthy, beautiful and cultured courtesan Vasantasena.

(c) **Visakhadatta:** Wrote Mudrarakshasa, which deals with the strategies of Kautilya, and mentions Chandragupta Maurya as being of low origin. Visakhadatta also wrote Devichandraguptam, which is the story of Chandragupta II's accession to the throne after killing Basana (the Saka king), Ramagupta (Chandragupta II's brother) and his subsequent marriage to Dhruvadevi.

(d) **Bhasa:** Thirteen plays written by Bhasa belong to this period, the most famous of which is Svapnavasavadattam.

(e) **Magha:** Wrote Sisupalvadh and Bhattikavya.

(f) **Kamandaka:** Wrote Nitisara belonging to Chandragupta's period, is the Gupta equivalent of Kautiluya's Arthashastra.

(g) **Vajjika:** Wrote Kaumudimahotsava. It talks about the accession of Chandragupta I to the throne.

(h) **Amarsimha:** Wrote Amarkosha, which is a dictionary in Sanskrit.

(i) **Vatsyayana:** Wrote Kamasutra, which is the first systematic enunciation of the art of love.

Scientific Literature Consisted of the works of

(a) **Aryabhatta:** In the book Suryasiddhanta, Aryabhatta examines and explains the true cause of the solar and lunar eclipses. His calculation of the size of the earth is very close to the modem estimation. He was the first Indian astronomer to discover and declare that the earth rotates around its axis. He was also the author of Aryabhattiyam, which deals with arithmetic, geometry, algebra and trigonometry.

(b) **Varahamihira:** His book 'Brihatsamhita' is an encyclopaedia of astronomy, botany, physical geography and natural history. His other works are Pancha Siddhantika, Brihat Jataka etc.

Coins

- **Numismatics:** In the realm of numismatics, coins serve as valuable artefacts for study. Ancient Indian currency was issued in the form of coins, not paper, because paper came into use during the 14th century. Early coins featured minimal symbols; however, as time progressed, they evolved to bear inscriptions of kings, issuers (guilds/ merchants), gods, or dates. This transition in coinage aids in the reconstruction of religious, cultural, and economic histories, providing a chronological framework.
- **Significance of Coins:** The inclusion of names of kings or issuers, references to deities, and chronological markers on coins from later periods offers a rich source for understanding historical narratives. These inscriptions contribute to unravelling the intricate tapestry of religious practices, cultural evolution, and economic dynamics.

Fig. 1.1: Ancient Coins

  - **For Examples:** The coins of Menander and Strabo-1 show them passing through different stages of life, suggesting their long reigns.
- **Historical Insights from Coin Transactions:** Beyond their intrinsic value, coins also act as silent witnesses to the dynamics of local and cross-border transactions. By examining the coins utilized in trade, historians can provide insights into the ruling dynasties of the time and the geographical extent of their dominion.
  - For example, the punch-marked coins of the Mauryan Empire, with symbols representing various regions, demonstrate the vast territorial extent of the Mauryan dominion in ancient India. These coins, found in different parts of the Indian subcontinent, serve as indicators of the empire's administrative reach.
- **Metal and Coinage as Economic Indicators:** The type of metal used in coins and their abundance serve as indicators of the economic prosperity within a kingdom. The prevalence and composition of coins shed light on the level of trade, the vibrancy of commerce, and the overall wealth of a given region during a particular period**.**
  - Few coins were issued by the guild of merchants and goldsmiths, which shows that coins helped in transactions on a large scale and contributed to trade. For Example, in post-Mauryan times, coins were made up of lead, biotin, copper, bronze, silver, and gold, etc., shows that trade and commerce flourished.
  - Also**,** the examination of coins from the **post-Gupta era** reveals a decline in trade and commerce. Only a sparse collection of coins from this period provides evidence of an economic downturn. This scarcity of numismatic evidence points to a broader historical context marked by economic challenges and a shift in the prevailing trade dynamics.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

Contrast the characteristics of coinage in ancient India with that of contemporary India. Explore the distinctions between these two sets of coins concerning their materials, symbols, designs, and geometric features.

Inscriptions

- **Materials used for Inscriptions:**
  - Inscriptions were carved on various surfaces, including seals, stone pillars, rocks, copper plates, temple walls, and images.
  - During the earlier centuries of the Christian era, copper plates were commonly used for inscriptions.
  - In South India, there was a shift towards using stone on a large scale for inscriptions over time.
  - Temples played a significant role as locations for inscriptions, with a large number of records being engraved on temple walls to serve as permanent records.
- **Epigraphy and Palaeography - Unveiling Ancient Writings:** The field of epigraphy delves into the study of inscriptions, while palaeography focuses on deciphering ancient writings found in inscriptions and other historical records. Together, these disciplines serve as crucial tools for unravelling the secrets embedded in the written remnants of the past.
- **Role of Inscriptions in Communication:** Inscriptions played a pivotal role in communicating vital information, particularly royal decrees and decisions related to social,

religious, and administrative matters. A prominent example is found in the Ashokan inscriptions, where engraved edicts conveyed the will of the ruler to both officials and the general populace.

Ashoka's Inscriptions

The Ashokan inscriptions stand as examples of how ancient rulers utilized this medium to disseminate their edicts. These inscriptions were instrumental in conveying royal orders that shaped the socio-religious and administrative landscape of the time. The engraved messages served as a **direct line of communication** from the ruler to those responsible for implementing these decisions and, by extension, to the broader population.

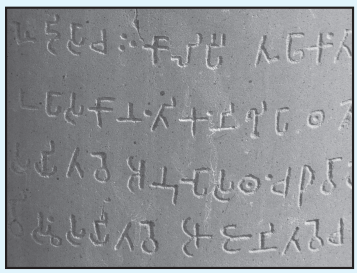


Fig. 1.2: Ashokan Inscriptions

- **Inscriptions as Historical Artifacts:** Beyond their communicative function, inscriptions also serve as invaluable historical artefacts. Through epigraphic and palaeographic analysis, scholars gain insights into the nuances of language, script, and the societal norms prevalent during the period in which these inscriptions were created.
- **Preservation of Administrative Legacy:** The inscribed orders and decisions not only had immediate relevance but also contributed to the preservation of an administrative legacy. Inscriptions became enduring records of governance, allowing subsequent generations to trace the evolution of social, religious, and administrative structures through the meticulous study of ancient writings.

Foreigners' Accounts

Accounts of foreigners, encompassing Greeks, Romans, and Chinese individuals who played varied roles as official historians, diplomats, pilgrims, and navigators/explorers. Their perspectives provide a unique lens through which we can explore the interactions and exchanges between distant cultures.

Chinese Accounts:

- **Faxian (Fa-hien) (c. 337 – c. 422 CE):** Faxian was a Chinese Buddhist monk who travelled to India in the 5th century and documented his pilgrimage in the "Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms."
- **Xuanzang (c. 602 – 664 CE):** Xuanzang's (Hiuen-Tsang) extensive travels in India during the 7th century are recorded in "Great Tang Records on the Western Regions." His accounts are invaluable for understanding the socio-religious landscape of ancient India.
- **Yijing (c. 635 – 713 CE):** Yijing, also known as, I Ching, was a Chinese Buddhist monk and traveller. His work "Record of the Buddhist Countries" provides insights into Indian Buddhism during the 7th century.

Greek Accounts:

- **Megasthenes (c. 350 – 290 BCE):** Megasthenes was an ambassador of Seleucus I Nicator and wrote the "Indica," offering valuable insights into ancient Indian society during the Maurya Empire.
- **Alexander the Great (356 – 323 BCE):** Alexander's invasion of the Indian subcontinent in 326 BCE had a profound impact on the region. Although his stay was brief, his campaigns and interactions with Indian leaders were documented by Greek historians like Arrian.
- **Strabo (64/63 BCE – c. 24 CE):** Strabo, a Greek geographer and historian, wrote extensively about India in his work "Geographica," compiling information from earlier Greek accounts.

Persian Accounts:

- **Darius I (550 – 486 BCE):** Although Darius I did not personally visit India, his empire, the Achaemenid Empire, extended its influence to the northwest regions of the Indian subcontinent. The Behistun Inscription, authored by Darius, mentions the Persian control over parts of the Indian territory.
- **Al-Biruni (973 – 1048 CE):** Al-Biruni was a Persian scholar who made significant contributions to the understanding of Indian culture, science, and philosophy during his visit to India in the 11th century.

Archaeological Excavations

In archaeological excavations, both vertical and horizontal approaches are employed to gather comprehensive information.

- **Vertical Excavations:** It involves digging downwards, layer by layer, providing a chronological sequence of material culture. This method allows researchers to understand the temporal progression of human activities and the development of civilizations over time.
- **Horizontal Excavations:** It entails digging laterally, offering a complete view of a particular culture within a specific layer. This approach provides a detailed snapshot of a specific period, offering insights into the artefacts, structures, and daily life of the people associated with that culture. Together, these dating methods and excavation techniques contribute to constructing a nuanced understanding of the past and its various facets.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

What factors do you believe attracted numerous foreigners from diverse regions to visit ancient India?

PALAEOLITHIC AGE (HUNTERS AND FOOD GATHERERS)

The Palaeolithic Age, the earliest phase of the Stone Age, emerged during the **Pleistocene epoch,** commonly known as the **Ice Age.** This era was widespread across almost all regions of India, except for the alluvial plains along the **Indus and Ganga rivers.**

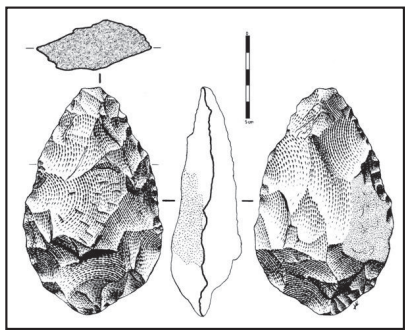


Fig. 1.3: Palaeolithic Tools

Features of Palaeolithic Age

- The Palaeolithic inhabitants of India are identified as belonging to the **Negrito race,** residing in caves and rock shelters.
- Primarily food gatherers, they sustained themselves through hunting and collecting wild **fruits and vegetables.**
- Their lifestyle lacked knowledge of agriculture, construction, pottery, and metalwork. The **understanding of fire** came to them only in later stages.
- Throughout this period, individuals utilized tools crafted from **unpolished and undressed raw stones,** predominantly hand axes, cleavers, choppers, blades, bruins, and scrapers.
- These stone tools were fashioned from a robust rock known as **'quartzite,'** the Palaeolithic people in India are also referred to as 'Quartzite men.'

The Palaeolithic Age is Divided into three Phases According to The Nature of Stone Tools Used

- **Early or Lower Palaeolithic**
- **Middle Palaeolithic**
- **Later or Upper Palaeolithic**

Let's discuss in detail these three stages.

Early or Lower Palaeolithic

During the Lower **Palaeolithic cultural phase,** the human ancestor species **Homo erectus** is believed to have lived in India. The first **Paleolithic tools** were identified at the site of **Pallavaram near Chennai by Robert Bruce Foote** in 1863. He found many pre-historic sites when he extensively surveyed different parts of South India. Since then, numerous Paleolithic sites have been identified and excavated all over India.

Some of the Important Features of Lower Palaeolithic

- **Tool Technology:** The hallmark of the Early or Lower Palaeolithic period is the utilization of primitive stone tools such as hand axes, choppers, and cleavers. These tools were primarily employed for essential activities like chopping, digging, and skinning.
- **Geographical Distribution:** Artifacts from the Early Palaeolithic era have been unearthed in various locations, including the Sohan river valleys (now in Pakistan), Kashmir, Thar Desert, Hiran Valley (Gujarat), rock shelters of Bhimbetka (Madhya Pradesh), **Athirampakkam, Pallavaram and Gudiyam near Chennai, Hunsgi valley and Isampur in Karnataka,** and the Belan Valley in Mirzapur (Uttar Pradesh).
- **Period:** The Early Palaeolithic period extends from approximately 500,000 BCE to 50,000 BCE, encapsulating a substantial portion of the Ice Age. This prolonged duration signifies a considerable period characterized by specific cultural and technological traits.
- **Functional Usage of Tools:** Hand axes, choppers, and cleavers from this period were instrumental in performing various tasks essential for survival. They served not only as cutting implements but also as tools for digging and skinning, showcasing the adaptability and versatility of early human tool technology.
- **Industries of Palaeolithic Cultures:** The Paleolithic cultures' industries are categorized into the Early, Middle, and Late Acheulean Industries. Early Acheulean tools encompass polyhedron spheroids, hand axes, cleavers, and flake tools. During the Acheulean Stage of the early Paleolithic Period, which began between 1.7 million and 1.5 million years ago and lasted until 250,000 to 200,000 years ago, the presence of good stone tools were probably an important determining factor in the distribution of early humans.
- **Ice Age Context:** The Lower Palaeolithic era encompasses a substantial part of the Ice Age (dating back approximately 2.6 million years ago to around 300,000 years ago), indicating the challenges and adaptations required for survival in a climatically dynamic environment. The tools developed during this period reflect the resourcefulness and ingenuity of early humans as they coped with the challenges posed by the glacial conditions.

Middle Palaeolithic

The Middle Palaeolithic, also known as the Middle Stone Age, is a significant archaeological period that falls within the broader epoch of the Palaeolithic era. This era is characterized by the continued development of stone tool technologies and the presence of anatomically modern Homo sapiens. The Middle Palaeolithic extends roughly from around 300,000 years ago to 30,000 years ago, bridging the gap between the Lower Palaeolithic and the Upper Palaeolithic.

- **Tool Technology Evolution:** The Middle Palaeolithic period is characterized by the evolution of stone tools made predominantly from flakes. This technological

shift includes the development of tools such as **scrapers, borers, points, and bladelike implements,** showcasing advancements in craftsmanship and functionality.

- **Geographical Distribution:** Archaeological evidence from the Middle Palaeolithic is discovered in diverse locations, including the **Soan, Narmada, and Tungabhadra river valleys, the Potwar plateau (located between the Indus and Jhelum rivers), and the Sanghao Cave near Peshawar,** Pakistan. These findings underscore the widespread presence of Middle Palaeolithic cultures.
- **Period:** The Middle Palaeolithic period is estimated to have occurred between 50,000 BCE and 40,000 BCE. This timeframe represents a continuation of human cultural evolution during a dynamic period of prehistory.
- **Geographical Sites of Significance:** The identification of Middle Palaeolithic artifacts in specific regions, such as the **river valleys of Soan, Narmada, and Tungabhadra, as well as the Potwar plateau and Sanghao Cave**, contributes to our understanding of human habitation patterns and resource utilization during this period.

Additional Information:

Nevasan Industry Discovery:

The Nevasan industry, a term coined by H.D. Sankalia in 1960, is associated with the Middle Palaeolithic. It was named after the Nevasa site in Maharashtra. This industry refers to the distinctive technological characteristics and tool types identified during this period, providing a framework for understanding the material culture of Middle Palaeolithic communities.

- **Continued Human Adaptation:** The Middle Palaeolithic era represents a stage in human prehistory marked by continued adaptation and innovation in tool technology. The tools crafted during this period reflect the changing needs and challenges faced by early human communities as they navigated diverse environments.

Later or Upper Palaeolithic

The Later or Upper Palaeolithic period followed the earlier Lower Palaeolithic era. This epoch witnessed notable advancements in human cultural and technological development. It is characterized by several key features, including more sophisticated stone tools, the emergence of art and symbolic expression, and changes in subsistence strategies.

- **Tool Innovation:** The Late or Upper Palaeolithic period is distinguished by the emergence of advanced tools, including parallel-sided blades, bruins, and, in some instances, the use of bone tools. These technological advancements mark a significant progression in the sophistication of tool craftsmanship.
- **Geographical Distribution:** Archaeological evidence from the Late Palaeolithic is dispersed across various regions, encompassing Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Central Madhya Pradesh, Southern Uttar Pradesh, and the Chota Nagpur Plateau. These findings indicate the widespread presence and cultural diversity of Late Palaeolithic communities.
- **Bone Tools in Specific Locations:** Bone tools are identified primarily at cave sites in **Kurnool** and **Muchchatla Chintamani Gavi in Andhra Pradesh.** The selective occurrence of bone tools at these sites suggests unique cultural practices or technological preferences in specific geographic contexts.
- **Period:** The Late Paleolithic period spans from approximately 40,000 BCE to 10,000 BCE, representing a substantial duration during the transition from the Paleolithic to the Mesolithic era. This period is characterized by dynamic cultural and climatic changes.
- **Appearance of Homo Sapiens:** Homo sapiens, the anatomically modern human species, first appeared at the end of the Late Paleolithic phase. This marks a critical juncture in human evolution, signifying the dominance of Homo sapiens as the prevalent species on Earth.
- **Climatic Context:** The Late Paleolithic period coincides with the last phase of the Ice Age, during which the climate experienced a shift towards warmer and less humid conditions. This climatic transformation likely influenced the strategies for survival and adaptation adopted by Late Paleolithic human communities.

IMPORTANT PALEOLITHIC SITES
Soan Valley and Potwar Plateau: Located in northwest India, the **Soan Valley and Potwar Plateau** are significant archaeological sites associated with the Paleolithic period. These regions have yielded valuable insights into early human habitation and tool usage.
Siwalik Hills: The **Siwalik Hills** in **northern India** are renowned for their rich deposits of Paleolithic artefacts. These hills have provided a treasure trove of evidence, contributing to our understanding of human evolution and cultural development in the region.
Bhimbetka, Madhya Pradesh: Bhimbetka, situated in Madhya Pradesh, is a UNESCO World Heritage site known for its rock shelters containing some of the earliest evidence of human occupation in the Indian subcontinent. The site boasts a vast array of rock art and Paleolithic tools.
Adamgarh Hill, Narmada Valley: Adamgarh Hill in the Narmada Valley is another notable Paleolithic site. Archaeological excavations at this location have revealed artefacts that provide insights into the technological and cultural aspects of early human societies.
Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh: Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh is recognized as an important site, particularly for the discovery of bone tools. The archaeological findings at Kurnool contribute to our understanding of the diversity of tool technologies during different phases of the Paleolithic period.
Attirampakkam, near Chennai: Attirampakkam, located near Chennai, is a significant Paleolithic site that has yielded stone tools and other artifacts. The site's archaeological significance lies in its role as a key location for understanding the cultural evolution of early humans in southern India.

Significant Features of The Paleolithic Hunter-Gatherers are as Follows

- **Hunter-Gatherer Lifestyle:** Paleolithic communities were predominantly hunter-gatherer societies, relying on **hunting, fishing, and gathering** of wild plants for sustenance. This lifestyle was essential for their survival during a time when agriculture had not yet been established.
- **Stone Tools and Large Pebbles for Hunting:** Stone tools were integral to the Paleolithic tool. These early humans utilized tools crafted from hard rocks, such as **quartzite,** for various purposes. Large pebbles were employed as tools for hunting, demonstrating the resourcefulness and adaptability of Paleolithic communities in their pursuit of food.
- **Use of Quartzite for Stone Implements:** Quartzite, a durable and hard rock, was a commonly used material for crafting stone implements during the Paleolithic period. The choice of quartzite as a raw material for tools reflects the practical understanding of early humans regarding the importance of using sturdy materials for their implements.
- **Adaptation to Environmental Challenges:** The use of stone tools and large pebbles for hunting indicates the adaptability of Paleolithic communities to their environmental challenges. These tools were essential for **procuring food, crafting shelter,** and addressing various daily needs in a dynamic and often harsh natural environment.
- **Technological Innovation:** The crafting and use of stone tools represented a significant leap in technological innovation for Paleolithic societies. These tools were not only crucial for hunting but also served various functions in daily life, showcasing the cognitive abilities and problem-solving skills of early humans.
- **Survival Strategies:** The reliance on hunting and gathering as the primary means of subsistence reflects the survival strategies developed by Paleolithic communities. The use of stone tools and large pebbles was intricately linked to their ability to secure food resources and navigate the challenges of their surroundings.

MESOLITHIC AGE (HUNTERS AND HERDERS)

The Mesolithic Age signifies an intermediate phase within Stone Age Culture. **Both Mesolithic** and **Neolithic Cultures** fall under the **Holocene era,** succeeding the Pleistocene era approximately **10,000 years ago.** Mesolithic communities relied on hunting, fishing, and food gathering, gradually incorporating animal domestication in later stages.

A distinctive feature of the Mesolithic Age was the downsizing of established tool types. Microliths, miniature stone tools crafted from crypto-crystalline silica, chalcedony, or chert in geometric and non-geometric shapes, became characteristic tools of this era. They served not only as standalone tools but also as components for composite tools, including spearheads, arrowheads, and sickles, affixed to wooden or bone handles.

Fig. 1.4: Mesolithic Tools

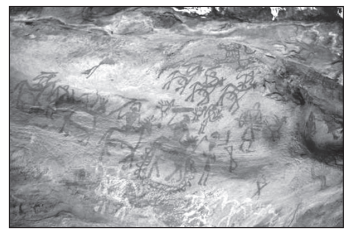


Fig. 1.5: Bhimbetka Cave Painting

Several notable aspects of the Mesolithic Age

- The Mesolithic Age had the **absence of pottery** at most sites, but it is found at Langhnaj in Gujarat and in the **Kaimur region of Mirzapur (Uttar Pradesh).**
- The last phase of this age marked the commencement of **plant cultivation.**
- The Mesolithic era introduced rock art in prehistory, with the first rock paintings in India discovered at Sohagi Ghat (Kaimur Hills, UP) in 1867.
- Mesolithic rock art sites have been identified across India, with a concentrated presence in Central India, including the **Bhimbetka Caves, Kharwar, Jaora, and Kathotia (Madhya Pradesh), Sundargarh and Sambalpur (Orissa), and Ezhuthu Guha (Kerala).** Most Mesolithic rock art depicts scenes dominated by animals, with a notable absence of depictions of snakes.

IMPORTANT MESOLITHIC SITES
Langhanj, Gujarat: Langhanj in Gujarat is an important Mesolithic site, contributing to our understanding of the cultural and technological developments during this transitional period between the Paleolithic and Neolithic eras.
Adamgarh, Madhya Pradesh: Adamgarh in **Madhya Pradesh** is a significant Mesolithic site known for archaeological findings that shed light on the lifestyle and activities of Mesolithic communities. It is also noteworthy for providing early evidence of animal domestication.
Bagor, Rajasthan: Bagor in Rajasthan, situated on the **River Kothari,** stands out as one of the largest and best-documented Mesolithic sites in India. It provides valuable insights into the material culture, subsistence patterns, and social organization of Mesolithic communities.
Chhota Nagpur Region, Central India: The **Chhota Nagpur region** in **Central India** has Mesolithic sites that play a crucial role in understanding the regional variations and cultural adaptations of communities during the Mesolithic period. **Both Adamgarh and Bagor**, mentioned earlier, provide early evidence of animal domestication in this context.

South of River Krishna, Tinnevelly in Tamil Nadu: Mesolithic sites south of the **River Krishna,** including **Tinnevelly in Tamil Nadu**, contribute to our knowledge of Mesolithic cultures in the southern part of India. These sites offer insights into the unique adaptations and practices of Mesolithic communities in diverse geographical settings.

Birbhanpur, West Bengal: Birbhanpur in West Bengal is another Mesolithic site, adding to the regional diversity of Mesolithic cultures in India. The findings from this site contribute to our understanding of the cultural and technological characteristics of Mesolithic communities in eastern India.

Sarai Nahar Rai, Near Allahabad, Pratapgarh Area: Sarai Nahar Rai, located near Allahabad in the Pratapgarh area, is a Mesolithic site that contributes to our understanding of human activities and cultural dynamics during this transitional period.

Mahadaha, Uttar Pradesh: Mahadaha in Uttar Pradesh is known for the discovery of bone artifacts, including arrowheads and bone ornaments. These findings provide valuable insights into the technology and personal adornment practices of Mesolithic communities in the region.

Significant Features

Significant features of the Mesolithic period are as follows:

- **Important Mesolithic sites:**
  - **Bagor, Rajasthan, on River Kothari,** is one of the largest and best documented Mesolithic sites in India.
  - Chotanagpur Region, Central India, is also an important site. Both Adamgarh, M.P. and Bagor provide the earliest evidence for the domestication of animals.
  - South of the River Krishna, Tinnevelly in Tamil Nadu.
  - Birbhanpur in West Bengal, Sarai Nahar Rai, near Allahabad, Pratapgarh area
  - Mahadaha, U.P., where bone artefacts are found, including arrowheads and bone ornaments.
- **Microlith Tools:** One of the distinctive features of the Mesolithic period is the development and use of **microlith tools** (miniature stone tools usually made of crypto-crystalline silica, chalcedony, or chert, both of geometrical and non-geometrical shapes). These tools were smaller in size compared to the larger implements of the Palaeolithic period, reflecting advancements in tool technology and the ability to create more specialized tools.
- **Introduction of Bow and Arrow:** The Mesolithic people are credited as the first to use the bow and arrow. This technological innovation revolutionized hunting techniques, providing greater precision and efficiency in hunting and significantly impacting subsistence strategies.
- **Settling for Longer Periods:** Mesolithic communities demonstrated a shift in settlement patterns, choosing to stay in one area for longer durations compared to the **nomadic lifestyle** of their **Paleolithic predecessors.** This change is often associated with more stable resource exploitation and environmental familiarity.

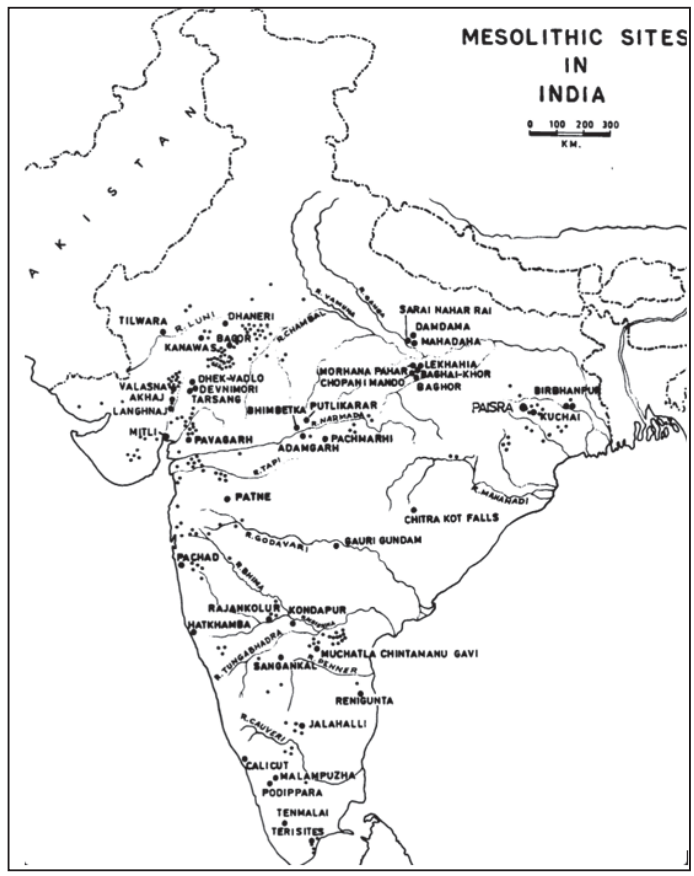


Fig. 1.6: Mesolithic Sites in India

- **Practice of Burials:** The Mesolithic period marks the emergence of the practice of burial, indicating a shift in social and cultural practices. The existence of burial sites suggests a growing complexity in societal structures and perhaps the beginning of ritualistic or symbolic practices associated with death.
- **Use of Stone Ornaments:** Another cultural innovation during the Mesolithic period was the use of stone ornaments. These ornaments, which could include **beads** and **other decorative items,** signifies a development in symbolic expression and personal adornment, providing insights into the social and cultural aspects of Mesolithic communities.
- **Increased Cultural Complexity:** The utilization of microlith tools, the introduction of t**he bow and arrow, the practice of burials,** and the use of stone ornaments collectively indicate an increase in **cultural complexity** during the Mesolithic period. This period laid the groundwork for further advancements in technology, social organization, and symbolic expression.
- **Adaptation to Local Environments:** Mesolithic communities demonstrated a **high degree of adaptability to local environments.**

- **Transition to Domestication:** The Mesolithic period witnessed a gradual transition towards domestication, as evidenced by the increased sedentism and the early evidence of animal domestication found in certain Mesolithic sites. This shift laid the groundwork for the agricultural practices that would become more prominent in the subsequent Neolithic period.
- **Discovery of Fire:** In the Mesolithic period, early human societies experienced a transformative breakthrough with the invention of fire. The mastery of fire in the Mesolithic period laid the foundation for technological advancements, influencing tool-making, hunting strategies, and ultimately contributing to the development of more complex societies in the millennia that followed.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

In modern times, larger weapons are often perceived as more advanced. However, why was the reduction in the size of tools considered an advancement during the Mesolithic age?

NEOLITHIC AGE (FOOD-PRODUCING STAGE)

The Neolithic Age unfolded in northern India around c. 8000–6000 BCE, while in certain regions of south and eastern India, it emerged as late as 1000 BCE. Its historical importance is underscored by **V. Gordon Childe,** who referred to this phase as the **Neolithic Revolution.**

Some Important Characteristics of Neolithic Age(Food Producing Stage)

- **Advent of food production:** Neolithic communities engaged in cultivation, growing crops such as ragi and horse gram (kulathi), alongside domesticating cattle, sheep, and goats.
- **Innovations in technology:** They pioneered **advancements in stone tool production,** creating polished, pecked, and ground stone tools. They shifted from relying on quartzite to using polished stones for tool-making. Celts played a crucial role, especially in crafting ground and polished handaxes. Neolithic Settlements can be categorized based on the types of axes used:
  - **North-Western:** Rectangular axes with a curved cutting edge.
  - **North-Eastern:** Polished stone axes with a rectangular butt, occasionally featuring shouldered hoes.
  - **Southern:** Axes with oval sides and pointed butt.

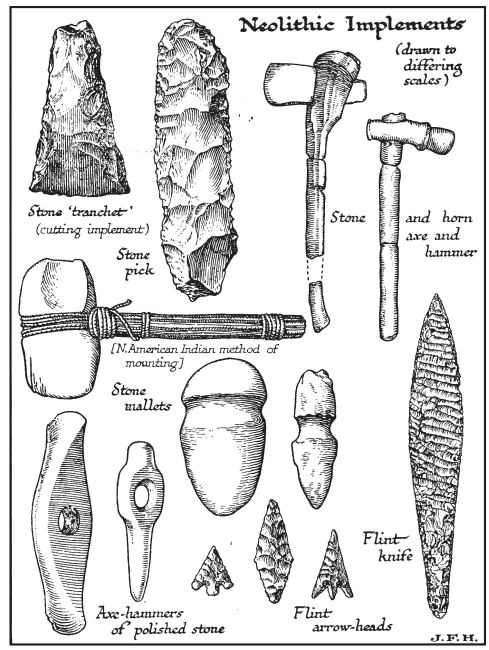


Fig. 1.7: Neolithic Implements

- **Pottery:** Neolithic communities initially handcrafted pottery and later adopted the potter's wheel. Their pottery repertoire included black burnished ware, grey ware, and mat-impressed ware, marking a significant expansion in the scale of pottery production.
- **Self-sufficient village communities:** In the later stages of the Neolithic era, communities embraced a more settled lifestyle, residing in circular and rectangular houses constructed from mud and reed. They acquired the skills to construct boats and engage in activities such as spinning cotton and wool and weaving cloth.
- **Division of labour:** With societal progress, recognising the need for additional labour led to the procurement of labour from non-kin groups. This marked the evolution of a more organized division of labour based on sex and age within Neolithic communities.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

Why did V. Gordon Childe view the Neolithic age as a revolutionary period? What significant transformations were introduced during this era? In your opinion, which of these changes holds the most significant value?

IMPORTANT NEOLITHIC SITES

Burzahom and Gufkraal, Jammu and Kashmir: Burzahom is known for its unique rectangular chopper, and Gufkraal is famous for pit dwellings, stone tools, and graveyards located within households. Burzahom also presents an intriguing aspect with the burial of domestic dogs alongside their masters in graves.

Maski, Brahmagiri, Piklihal, Budihal, and Tekkalakota, Karnataka: Maski, Brahmagiri, Piklihal, Budihal, and Tekkalakota in Karnataka provide evidence of cattle herding. Budihal is noteworthy for its findings related to community food preparation and feasting, shedding light on social practices during the Neolithic period.

Paiyampalli, Tamil Nadu, and Utnur, Andhra Pradesh: Paiyampalli in Tamil Nadu and Utnur in Andhra Pradesh contribute to the understanding of Neolithic cultures in southern India. These sites provide insights into the regional variations in technological and cultural practices during the Neolithic period.

Garo Hills, Meghalaya, and Chirand, Bihar: Garo Hills in Meghalaya and Chirand in Bihar exhibit considerable use of bone implements, particularly those made of antlers. These sites contribute to our understanding of the varied tools and materials used during the Neolithic period.

Saraikhola, Taxila on Potwar Plateau, and Amri, Kotdiji, Mehrgarh, Pakistan: Saraikhola near Taxila, Amri, Kotdiji, and Mehrgarh in Pakistan hold significance as Neolithic sites. Mehrgarh, in particular, is recognized as the earliest Neolithic site and is often referred to as the "Breadbasket of Balochistan."

Koldihwa and Mahagara, South of Allahabad: Koldihwa in the Belan Valley is unique for having three-fold settlements from the Neolithic, Chalcolithic, and Iron Age periods. Mahagara, also south of Allahabad, features many strata of circular huts along with crude hand-made pottery. It is notable for providing the earliest evidence of rice cultivation in the world.

Chopani – Mando, Belan Valley: Chopani – Mando in the Belan Valley provides the earliest evidence of the use of pottery during the Neolithic period. The discovery of pottery is a crucial indicator of technological advancements and changing cultural practices.

Belan Valley and Narmada Valley: Belan Valley, located on the northern spurs of the Vindhyas, and the middle part of the Narmada Valley, showcase evidence of all three phases of Paleolithic settlement, followed by Mesolithic and Neolithic settlements. These sites contribute to a comprehensive understanding of human habitation and cultural evolution over multiple periods.

Significant Features

Significant features of the Neolithic period are as follows:

- **Agriculture:** The Neolithic Age is characterized by the shift from a nomadic, hunter-gatherer lifestyle to settled agriculture. Communities began cultivating crops, such as wheat, barley, rice, and millet, marking a transformative development in human subsistence strategies.
- **Domestication of Animals:** Alongside agriculture, the Neolithic period witnessed the domestication of animals. Humans began to keep and raise animals for various purposes, including food, labor, and other resources. This symbiotic relationship between humans and animals played a crucial role in the development of Neolithic societies.

Fig. 1.8: Neolithic sites of India

- **Sharp and Polished Stone Tools:** Technological advancements in toolmaking are evident in the Neolithic period, with the use of sharp and polished stone tools. These tools were crafted with greater precision and efficiency, reflecting the increased skill and knowledge of Neolithic communities.
- **Mud Brick Houses:** The transition from temporary shelters to more permanent dwellings is marked by the construction of mud brick houses during the Neolithic Age. This shift indicates a more settled lifestyle and the establishment of permanent communities.
- **Pottery and the Use of Wheels:** Neolithic communities utilized wheels for pottery-making, a significant technological innovation that facilitated the production of more sophisticated and standardized pottery. The use of earthenware became prevalent, providing improved storage and cooking vessels.
- **Village Communities:** The Neolithic Age is characterized by the emergence of village communities. The shift from small, mobile groups to settled villages signifies a fundamental change in social organization, with more complex structures and communal living.
- **Advancements in Textile Production:** Advances in textile production are observed in the Neolithic Age, with the use of cotton and wool for clothing. The cultivation of plants for fibers and the domestication of animals for wool contributed to the development of textile industries within these communities.

- **Cultivation of Crops:** Neolithic communities cultivated a variety of crops, including wheat, barley, rice, and millet. Rice cultivation, in particular, was extensive in eastern India, showcasing regional variations in agricultural practices.

The innovations and advancements during Neolithic period laid the foundation for the development of more complex societies in subsequent ages.

CHALCOLITHIC AGE / COPPER-STONE AGE (C. 3000–500 BCE)

- The Chalcolithic age marked a pivotal moment with the simultaneous use of metal and stone tools. Copper was the first metal employed, occasionally supplemented by bronze. While the Chalcolithic stage is predominantly associated with the pre-Harappan settlements in terms of technology, it appears in various regions of the country after the decline of the Harappa bronze culture. Some Chalcolithic cultures coexisted with the Harappan and pre-Harappan cultures, with a general trend suggesting a post-Harappan chronology.

Fig. 1.9: Remains Found at Ahar Site Rajasthan (Chalcolithic)

- Chalcolithic communities engaged in the domestication of various animals, such as cows, sheep, goats, pigs, and buffaloes, while also practicing deer hunting. Although beef was consumed, there was a preference against pork, and horses were not part of their familiarity. Interestingly, domesticated animals were primarily slaughtered for meat rather than being utilized for dairy products—a practice that persisted among the Gond people of Bastar. Agriculture played a significant role, with the cultivation of wheat, rice, bajra, and several pulses like lentils, black gram, green gram, and grass pea. In the eastern regions, a diet centered around fish and rice prevailed, coupled with a prevalent use of slash-and-burn or jhum cultivation. Notably, neither the plough nor the hoe have been discovered at any site from this period.
- The Chalcolithic people employed various types of pottery, with black and red pottery being the most popular. Crafted using the potter's wheel, it featured intricate white line designs. An intriguing aspect is that female potters abstained from using the potter's wheel, with this practice being exclusively reserved for men.

IMPORTANT CHALCOLITHIC SITES
Harappan Culture: The Harappan culture, also known as the Indus Valley Civilization, is considered a significant part of the Chalcolithic culture. This advanced civilization, with its well-planned cities and sophisticated urban features, represents a crucial aspect of Chalcolithic developments in the Indian subcontinent.
South India - River Valleys: In South India, various river valleys played a crucial role in the Chalcolithic period. The Godavari, Krishna, Tungabhadra, Pennar, and Kaveri river valleys were inhabited during this time, contributing to the understanding of regional variations in Chalcolithic cultures.
Paiyampalli-Tamil Nadu: Paiyampalli in Tamil Nadu is an important Chalcolithic site in South India. Archaeological findings at Paiyampalli provide insights into the material culture, technological practices, and societal organization of Chalcolithic communities in the region.
Ahar and Gilund, Banas Valley-Rajasthan: Ahar and Gilund, located in the Banas Valley of Rajasthan, are notable Chalcolithic sites. Ahar is known for its focus on smelting and metallurgy, indicating advancements in metalworking technologies. Gilund, on the other hand, occasionally used burnt bricks, offering unique insights into architectural practices during the Chalcolithic period.
Nevasa, Jorwe, Navdatoli, Daimabad, Songaon, Inamgaon, Nasik - Maharashtra: Nevasa, Jorwe, Navdatoli, Daimabad, Songaon, Inamgaon, and Nasik in Maharashtra are significant Chalcolithic sites in the Indian subcontinent. These locations provide insights into the non-Harappan cultures of the Chalcolithic period. Daimabad, in particular, is renowned for the recovery of bronze goods.
Chirand, Senuar, Sonpur - Bihar, Mahishdal - West Bengal: Chirand, Senuar, Sonpur in Bihar, and Mahishdal in West Bengal are Chalcolithic sites that contribute to our understanding of the cultural developments in eastern India during this period.
Kayatha - Madhya Pradesh: Kayatha in Madhya Pradesh features mud-plastered floors and exhibits pre-Harappan elements in pottery. This site provides insights into the cultural and technological characteristics of the Chalcolithic communities in central India.
Malwa - Madhya Pradesh: Malwa in Madhya Pradesh is known for having the richest Chalcolithic ceramics, spindle whorls, and showcasing a non-Harappan cultural context. The site offers valuable information about the material culture and technological advancements of Chalcolithic societies in the region.

Significant Features

Additional distinctive features of individuals in the Chalcolithic age include:

- **Unfamiliarity with burnt brick:** typically, they resided in thatched houses constructed from mud bricks, constituting a village-based economy.

- **Writing:** There was absence of knowledge regarding writing during the Chalcolithic era.
- **Villages:** Presence of small villages characterized by closely situated huts.
- **Cooking:** Adoption of cooking practices for food preparation.
- **Worship of Mother Goddess:** Discovery of small clay images of earth goddesses at Chalcolithic sites, suggesting a possible veneration of the Mother Goddess.
- **Ornaments:** Fondness for ornaments and decoration, with women adorning themselves with shell and bone ornaments and intricately crafted combs in their hair.
- **Knowledge of Bulls:** The bull possibly served as a religious symbol, inferred from stylized bull terracottas found in Malwa and Rajasthan.
- Expertise in copper craftsmanship, including the art of copper-smelting, coupled with proficiency in stone working. Production of beads from semi-precious stones like carnelian, steatite, and quartz crystal was also a notable skill.
- Knowledge of spinning and weaving.
- Existence of Chalcolithic settlements in southeastern Rajasthan, western Madhya Pradesh, western Maharashtra, and other parts of southern and eastern India, with discernible regional variations in cereals cultivated, pottery styles, and other aspects. For example, rice production was predominant in eastern India, while barley and wheat were cultivated in western India.
- **Varied burial practices across regions:** In Maharashtra, the dead were buried in the north-south direction, whereas southern India followed an east-west burial orientation. Eastern India practiced fractional burial.
- **High infant mortality:** It is evidenced by the burial of a significant number of children in western Maharashtra.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

Why was the production of copper, achieved through melting techniques, introduced well before the Iron Age, despite being an advanced technology?

- **Emergence of social inequalities:** With chiefs residing in rectangular houses exerting dominance over others living in round huts, marking the beginnings of social stratification in Chalcolithic societies.

BRONZE AGE

The Bronze Age, succeeding the Copper Age, marked a pivotal period in human history as it propelled advancements in toolmaking and survival equipment. During this era, the discovery of bronze, an alloy of tin and copper, provided a groundbreaking alternative for tool production, offering increased rigidity and durability compared to copper tools. The Bronze Age is generally recognized to have begun around 3000 BC, initially in Egypt and subsequently spreading to regions across Northern Europe and Asia.

A key factor in the widespread adoption of bronze tools was the necessity to secure raw materials, particularly tin, as people migrated to different locations in search of resources essential for bronze production.

Notable Inventions during the Bronze Age include:

- **Wheel:** The Mesopotamian civilization is credited with the invention of the wheel around 3500 BC. This innovation had a profound impact on transportation and machinery, revolutionizing various aspects of daily life.
- **Tongue Sword:** The tongue sword, a military tool, gained prominence in the European region during the Bronze Age. Its design and functionality were tailored to the needs of military forces, reflecting advancements in weaponry.
- **Locks:** Evidence of the first locks emerged during the Bronze Age, indicating a growing need for securing valuables. This innovation in security measures reflected the evolving complexity of societies during this period.
- **Other Inventions:** Various other inventions characterized the Bronze Age, including the development of ropes, umbrellas, and socketed axes with sharp bronze fronts. These inventions not only improved daily life but also played essential roles in agriculture, construction, and defense.

The Bronze Age was marked by the flourishing of diverse cultures and the exchange of ideas, technologies, and goods across regions. The mastery of bronze metallurgy enabled societies to create sophisticated tools and implements, fostering progress in various fields. As civilizations expanded and interacted, the innovations of the Bronze Age laid the groundwork for future advancements, shaping the course of human history.

THE AGES

Pre-Historic Ages	Important Sites	Features
PALAEOLITHIC/ OLD STONE AGE (BEFORE 10,000 B.C.)	❑ The Soan valley and Potwar Plateau in northwest India. ❑ The Siwalik hills in north India. ❑ Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh. ❑ Adamgarh hill in Narmada valley. ❑ Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh. ❑ Attirampakkam near Chennai.	❑ Hunter-gatherers. ❑ Used stool tools and large pebbles for hunting. ❑ Stone implements are made of a hard rock known as quartzite.

MESOLITHIC/MIDDLE STONE AGE (10,000 B.C.-6000 B.C.)	❑ Langhnaj in Gujarat ❑ Adamgarh in MP ❑ Some places of Rajasthan, UP and Bihar.	❑ Stone tools (microlith tools / small-sized) ❑ First people to use bow and arrow. ❑ Settle for longer periods in an area. ❑ First burials are reported and use of stone-ornaments also appears. ❑ Discovery of Fire
NEOLITHIC AGE (6000 B.C.-1000 B.C.)	❑ Kashmir valley ❑ Chirand in Bihar, Belan valley in UP ❑ Several places of Deccan ❑ South India: Maski, Brahmagiri, Hallur and Kodekal in Karnataka, ❑ Paiyampalli in TN and Utnur in AP.	❑ Agriculture was practiced. ❑ Domestication of animals was started. ❑ Used sharp and polished stone tools. ❑ Built mud brick houses. ❑ Wheels were used to make pottery. ❑ Used earthenware. ❑ Village communities were developed. ❑ Clothes made of cotton and wool. ❑ Agriculture: Wheat, barely, rice, millet. Rice cultivation was extensive in eastern India.
CHALCOLITHIC AGE (3000 B.C.-500 B.C.)	❑ Harappan culture is considered as a part of Chalcolithic culture. ❑ South India: the river valleys of the Godavari, Krishna, Tungabhadra, Pennar and Kaveri. ❑ Paiyampalli in TN.	❑ Copper and bronze came to be used. ❑ Smelting metal ore and crafting metal artifacts. ❑ People began to travel long distances to obtain metal ores. ❑ Unaware of - Iron, horse and script.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the exploration of different periods in ancient Indian history, from the Palaeolithic era to the Chalcolithic period, reveals a fascinating tapestry of human evolution, cultural innovation, and technological advancement. The Palaeolithic era, marked by the use of primitive stone tools, witnessed the adaptability of early humans to diverse environments. The Middle and Late Palaeolithic periods showcased advancements in tool technology, highlighting the resourcefulness and ingenuity of our ancestors. The Mesolithic period witnessed significant changes, with the introduction of microlithic tools, the use of bows and arrows, and the emergence of settled communities. The shift towards agriculture, domestication of animals, and the development of polished stone tools characterized the Neolithic Age, setting the stage for more complex societies. The Chalcolithic period, marked by the use of copper and stone tools, showcased regional variations and cultural diversity.

Harappan Civilization

2

INTRODUCTION

The inception of the **Indus Valley Civilization (IVC)**, commonly identified as the Harappan Civilization, signifies the commencement of historical developments in the Indian subcontinent. This civilisation flourished approximately around 2,500 BC in the western region of South Asia, encompassing contemporary Pakistan and Western India.

While it is classified as a civilisation that is older than Chalcolithic civilisations, in many ways, it was far more developed than settlements in the Chalcolithic Age. The IVC traversed through three distinct phases: the **Early Harappan Phase (c. 3300–2600 BCE) the Mature Harappan Phase(c. 2600–1900 BCE), and the Late Harappan Phase(c.1900–1300 BCE)**. Noteworthy for its prominence, the Indus Valley hosted the most extensive of ancient urban civilizations in comparison to Egypt, Mesopotamia, and China.

- **BP** stands for Before Present
- **BCE** stands for Before Common Era
- **CE** stands for the Common Era. The present year is 2023 according to this dating system.
- **c.** stands for the Latin word circa and means "approximate."

THE HARAPPAN CIVILISATION AND ITS THREE PHASES

The Harappan civilization, contemporaneous with Mesopotamia and Egypt, stands as the inaugural urban civilization in South Asia, surpassing its counterparts in territorial expanse, covering approximately 800,000 square kilometres. Initially designated as the Indus Valley Civilization by early historians, subsequent archaeological excavations in the Ghaggar-Hakra belt revealed extensive settlements beyond the confines of the Indus region. Harappa, being the initial archaeological site unearthed, lends its name to the entire civilization. Integral to the proto-history of India, the Harappan civilization is situated within the Bronze Age, predating Chalcolithic civilizations yet demonstrating a superior level of development. Archaeological evidence provides valuable insights into the Harappan civilization, characterised by a blend of cultural uniformity and diversity.

The Origin of the Harappan Culture

The origin of the Harappan culture remains a subject of ongoing debate, with **two primary perspectives** posited:

- One suggesting emergence from pre-Harappan/ indigenous village cultures, deemed a more plausible viewpoint.
- Another proposed diffusion from the Mesopotamian Civilization according to diffusionist theorists.
- The triangular expanse occupied by the Harappan civilization, encompassing present-day Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat, and Pakistan, represents the largest among the three ancient urban civilisations, the others being ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia (contemporary Iraq). Despite the wealth of archaeological findings, a definitive consensus on the precise origin of the Harappan culture still needs to be discovered within academic discourse.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

What factors contribute to the Harappan civilization being labelled as the "Harappan age" rather than the "Mohenjodaro age"?

The Harappan Civilization Unfolds in three Discernible Phases

- The Early/Pre-Harappan phase (c. 3300-2600 BCE)
- The Mature Harappan phase (c. 2600-1900 BCE)
- The Late Harappan phase (c. 1900-1300 BCE)

According to some classifications, there are **four important stages or phases** of evolution and they are named as **pre-Harappan, early-Harappan, mature-Harappan and late Harappan.**

- The **pre-Harappan stage is located in eastern Baluchistan.** The excavations at Mehrgarh, 150 miles to the northwest of Mohenjodaro, reveal the existence of pre-Harappan culture. In this stage, the nomadic people began to lead a settled agricultural life.

Despite an inherent cultural continuity throughout its phases, but yet nuanced differences among these three phases.

FIRST PHASE: THE EARLY HARAPPAN PHASE (3300 TO 2600 BCE)

The **Early Harappan Phase,** spanning from 3300 BCE to 2600 BCE, derives its nomenclature from the adjacent Ravi

River. Commencing with the gradual migration of farmers from the highlands to the lowland river valleys, this phase predates the **Kot Diji Phase (2800–2600 BCE),** named after a location in northern Sindh, Pakistan, close to Mohenjo-Daro. Notably, the earliest specimens of the Indus script, a distinctive feature of this civilization, trace back to the **third millennium BCE.**

- During this phase, settlements emerged along the Hakra River, with **Kalibangan** in India being a notable village discovered in this context.
- The civilization's trade networks extended to analogous regional cultures and distant sources supplying raw materials, such as **lapis lazuli and other materials for bead-making.**
- Villagers during this period had successfully domesticated a variety of crops, including peas, sesame seeds, dates, and cotton. Additionally, the **domestication of animals like the water buffalo** was evident.
- **By 2600 BCE,** the early Harappan villages had undergone a transformative process, evolving into significant urban centres, thereby marking the inception of the mature Harappan phase. According to recent research findings, there was a discernible shift in the societal landscape of the Indus Valley, transitioning from **villages to fully-fledged cities** during this critical juncture.

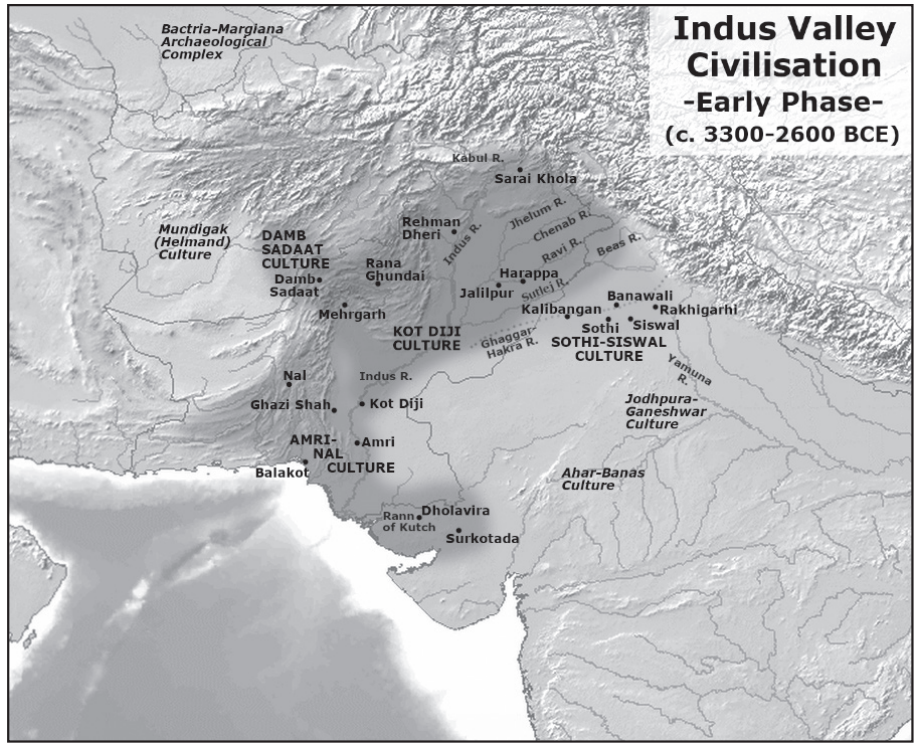


Fig. 2.1: Map of IVC Early Phase

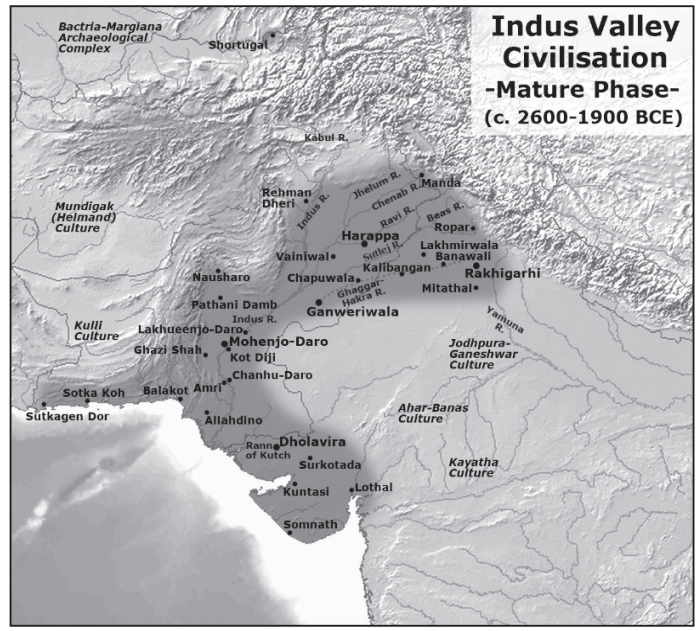


Fig. 2.2: Map of IVC Mature Phase

IGNITE YOUR MIND

What is the significance of the proximity of major Harappan sites to rivers? How does this geographical connection reflect the interdependence between geography and societal development during that era?

SECOND PHASE: THE MATURE HARAPPAN PHASE FROM 2600 TO 1900 BCE

The Mature Harappan Phase, spanning from 2600 BCE to 1900 BCE, witnessed the remarkable expansion of early Harappan civilizations into expansive urban centres by 2600 BCE. Prominent among these urban centres were **Harappa, Ganeriwala, and Mohenjo-daro** in contemporary Pakistan, alongside **Dholavira, Kalibangan, Rakhigarhi, Rupar, and Lothal** in present-day India, exemplifying the scale and complexity of these settlements.

Characteristics of the Mature Harappan Phase

- The **characteristics of the Mature Harappan Phase** are exemplified by the **urban design and architecture,** as well as the **advancements in art, crafts,** and the prevailing social, religious, and economic conditions of the time. Notably, the urban layout and architecture of the Harappan civilization have been subjects of extensive scholarly investigation.

- These **urban centres featured well-planned, expansive, and straight roadways,** reflecting a high degree of urban planning sophistication. Residential structures were equipped with **efficient drainage systems and ventilation**, attesting to the meticulous attention given to both functional and aesthetic aspects of urban living during this period. The finds from the Mature Harappan Phase contribute significantly to our understanding of the advanced and organised nature of the Harappan civilization.

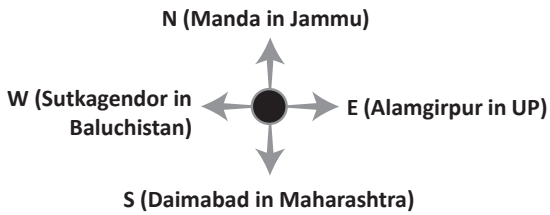


Fig. 2.3: Extent of Harappan Civilization

Town Planning

The Harappan civilization is distinguished for its **urban orientation and adept civic planning** and organisation. Typically, Harappan cities exhibited a division into two distinct sections, the Citadel and the Lower Town.

A) Citadel/Raised Part:

- This segment, occupying a relatively smaller area, was often positioned to the **west of the city.**
- It served as the **residence of the city's rulers** and encompassed **public edifices, granaries, and key workshops.**
- The Citadel reveals evidence of structures likely designated for specific public purposes. Among these, the warehouse, a substantial edifice, retains its lower brick sections, while the upper portions, likely constructed of wood, have deteriorated over time.

Citadels

While most Harappan settlements have a small, high western part and a larger, lower eastern section, there are variations. The entire settlement was fortified at sites such as Dholavira and Lothal (Gujarat), and sections within the town were also separated by walls. The Citadel within **Lothal** was not walled off but was built at a height.

- Another notable structure on the Citadel is the **Great Bath**, comprising **a large rectangular tank** situated within a courtyard and surrounded by a corridor on all four sides.
  - The tank featured two sets of steps on the north and south, leading into it. To ensure water tightness, bricks were set on edge, and **gypsum mortar** was employed in the construction.
  - Surrounding the tank, rooms were present on three sides, one of which housed a sizable well. A **substantial drain** facilitated the outflow of water from the tank.
  - Adjacent to the Great Bath, across a lane to the north, stood **a smaller building containing eight bathrooms**—four on each side of a corridor—each with drains connecting to a main drain running along the corridor.
  - The distinctive nature of this structure, coupled with its contextual placement within the Citadel alongside other unique buildings, has led scholars to posit that it served a specific purpose, possibly as a site for ritualistic bathing.

B) Lower Part:

- The lower part of the city was **inhabited by the general populace**, where residents conducted their daily lives and pursued their professional activities.
- **Residential structures** in the Lower town of Mohenjodaro serve as illustrations of domestic architecture.
- A significant number of these dwellings were designed around a central courtyard, encompassed by rooms on all sides.
- The courtyard likely functioned as the focal point for various activities, such as cooking and weaving, especially in hot and arid weather conditions.
- Notably, a **privacy concern is evident** in the **absence of windows along the ground-level walls**, and the main entrance does not provide a direct line of sight into the interior or the courtyard.
- Each dwelling featured its own brick-paved bathroom, equipped with drains seamlessly connected to street drains.
- Some residences exhibited remnants of staircases, indicating access to a second floor or the roof.
- Additionally, many houses incorporated wells, often situated in a room accessible from the exterior, possibly intended for use by passers-by. Scholars have approximated that the total count of wells in Mohenjodaro was approximately 700.

It adhered to a **grid pattern**, where streets intersect at right angles. Key features of Harappan town planning include:

- **Wide Streets:** The streets were notably broad, the Main Street measuring ten metres in width. This layout divided the town into rectangular and square blocks.
- **Lamp-posts:** At regular intervals, lamp-posts adorned the streets. These lamp-posts utilized high-quality burnt bricks, featuring a distinctive ratio of 1:2:4 in terms of thickness, width, and length consistently applied across all Harappan structures. Noteworthy was the uniformity in the average size of bricks, measuring 7 x 14 x 28 cm^3 for houses and 10 x 20 x 40 cm^3 for city walls.
- **Drainage System:** The Harappan civilization boasted an exemplary drainage system. The drains, **constructed using mortar, lime, and gypsum**, were covered with large brick slabs to facilitate easy cleaning.

- **Architectural Features of Houses:** Houses in the Harappan civilization typically comprised two or more storeys, displaying variations in size but exhibiting a certain monotony. Notably, house windows did not face the streets, and residences featured tiled bathrooms. Some houses also possessed individual wells.

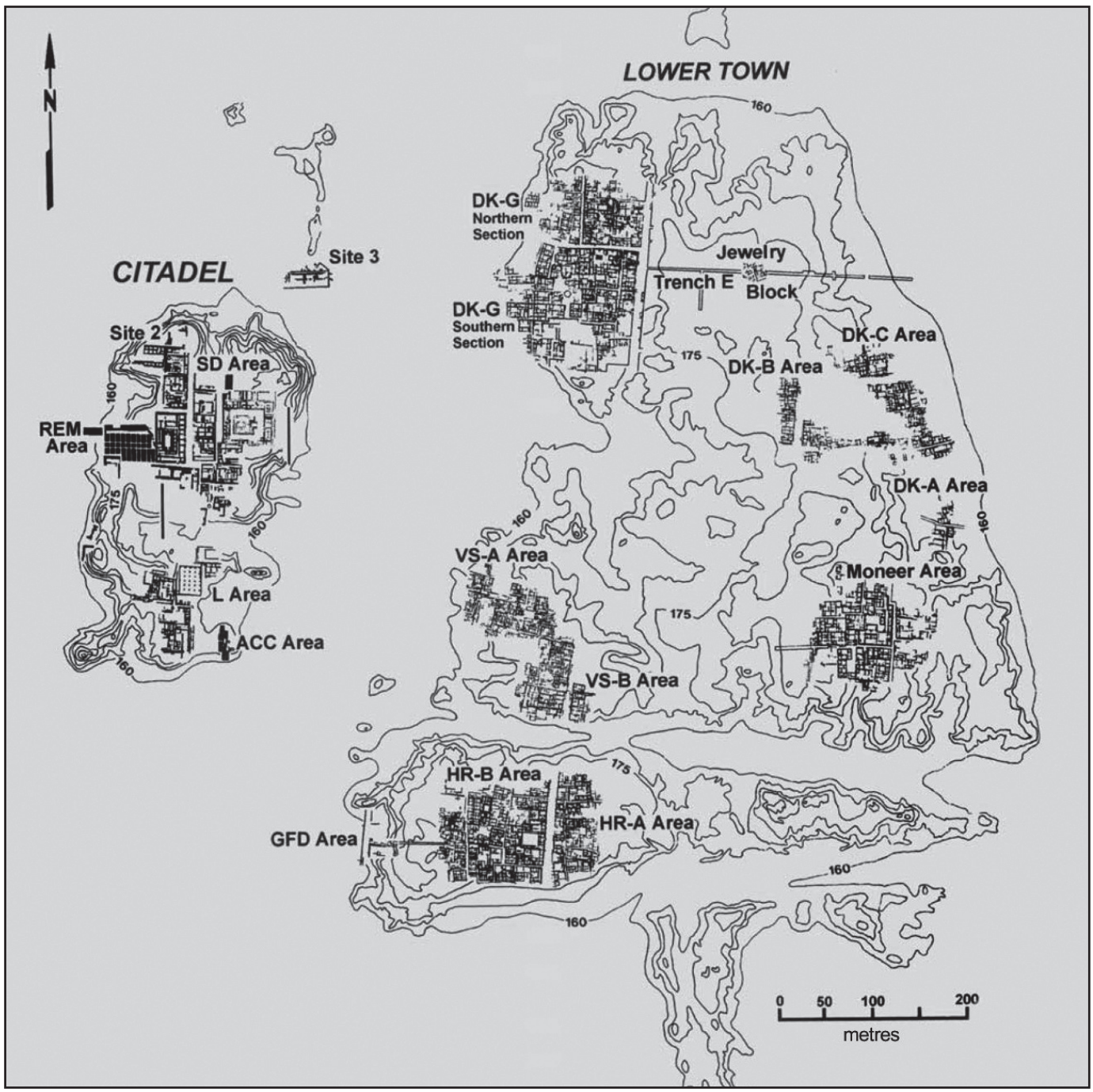


Fig. 2.4: Layout of Mohenjodaro

Society

The Harappan society, characterized as an urban society, predominantly consisted of **middle-class individuals.** The excavated houses indicate the presence of at least **three discernible social groups: the ruling class, affluent merchants, and impoverished labourers residing in the lower part of the city.** Nevertheless, there remains a lack of clarity among historians regarding the nature of inheritance within Harappan society.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

Despite the absence of evident signs of war or violence, indications of subjugation exist. Do you believe that the individuals willingly accepted this political structure?

Other distinctive features of the Harappan society include:

- **Expertise in Pottery:** The Harappans demonstrated adeptness in the use of the potter's wheel, with a focus on **red-black pottery**.
  - This pottery, characterized by red ware adorned with black designs, often depicting trees and circles, was widely prevalent.
  - Some pots served utilitarian purposes such as storing grain or water, while perforated pots were likely employed for brewing fermented alcoholic beverages.

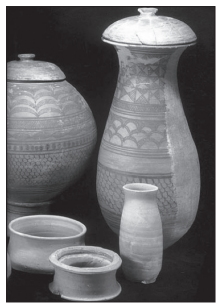


Fig. 2.5: Pottery

- **Terracotta Artefacts:** Numerous terracotta artefacts have been unearthed at various sites, encompassing **figurines of animals like bulls, buffaloes, dogs, monkeys, toy carts, and human representations.** Notably, there is a notable prevalence of female figurines compared to male figurines.

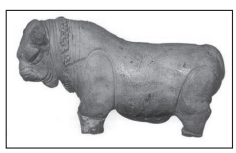


Fig. 2.6: A Terracotta Bull

- **Bead-Making and Jewellery:** The Harappans excelled in the art of bead-making, and excavated jewellery includes items crafted from gold and silver. **Necklaces, bracelets, pendants, earrings, and brooches** have been discovered. Noteworthy finds include necklaces made from **gold, silver, carnelian, and semi-precious stones at Allahdino, near Karachi.**
- **Metals:** Metals such as copper, bronze, silver, and gold were known and utilised by the Harappans, with the notable absence of iron. **Proficient in metallurgy and alloy production**, craftsmen fashioned artefacts from both pure copper and bronze, including items like spears, knives, short swords, mirrors, axes, needles, rings, and bangles. An intriguing observation is the greater prevalence of pure copper artefacts compared to alloyed bronze items, suggesting a cultural preference rather than technological limitations.

Fig. 2.7: Copper Tools

- **Costumes:** In terms of attire, the Harappans commonly wore garments made of cotton or wool. The dress of both men and women consisted of two pieces of cloth, one upper garment and the other lower garment.
  - Beads were worn by men and women. Jewellery such as bangles, bracelets, fillets, girdles, anklets, earrings and fingerrings were worn by women.
  - These ornaments were made of gold, silver, copper, bronze and semi-precious stones.
  - The **use of cosmetics** was common.
- **Games:** Children's toys include little clay carts. Marbles, balls and dice were used for games. Fishing was a regular occupation, while hunting and bullfighting were other pastimes.
- **Dietary patterns:** Their culinary practices included a preference for non-vegetarian food, with fish being a common dietary choice. **Milk and curd** were also integral components of their diet. The Harappan societies in Sindh and Punjab predominantly consumed **wheat and barley,** while those in Rangpur and Surkotada preferred rice and millet.
- **Harappan script:** It was characterised as pictographic and logosyllabic, and employed a **boustrophedon writing style**—alternating between right to left and left to right in consecutive lines. Despite the brevity of most inscriptions, with the longest containing **approximately 26 signs**, the Harappan script remains undeciphered till date.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

What factors contributed to historians successfully decoding the language of contemporary civilizations like Mesopotamia while encountering challenges in deciphering the Harappan script?

- The **script was not alphabetical**, where each sign represents a vowel or consonant, as it comprises an extensive number of signs. The number of signs is between 400 and 600, of which 40 or 60 are basic and the rest are their variants.
- The fish symbol is most represented in the pictographs.
- The existence of a common script suggests cultural integration, while its virtual disappearance by circa 1700 BCE hints at limited dissemination of writing within the society.
- The diversity of objects bearing Harappan writing is noteworthy, including seals, copper tools, jar rims, copper and terracotta tablets, jewellery, bone rods, and even an ancient signboard.
- It is crucial to consider that writing may have also been present on perishable materials, although direct evidence of such inscriptions may not have endured over time.
- **Harappan seals:** Seals held particular significance in the Harappan context, likely serving as markers of ownership or possibly functioning as amulets. The standard Harappan seal was a **square or oblong plaque** crafted from **steatite stone**, often bearing an emblem with religious connotations and a name or brief description.
  - The animal most frequently encountered on the seals is a humpless bull. Scholars propose that the accompanying motif, often depicting an animal, conveyed meaning to individuals who could not read.
  - Size varies from **½ inch to 2-1/2 inches**. The two main shapes are the square type with a carved animal and an inscription on it, and the rectangular type with an inscription only.

Fig. 2.8: Seals

- Three cylindrical seals from Mesopotamia have been found in Mohenjodaro, one cylindrical seal from Kalibangan, and one circular button-shaped seal called the Persian Gulf seal has been found from Lothal.
- 33 Harappan seals are found in various foreign places such as Susa, Ur, Nippur, and Asmar.

Economy

The inferences about the Harappan economy have been drawn from its robust trade interactions with contemporaneous Mesopotamian and Persian civilizations. The Mesopotamians referred to the Indus Region as **'Meluhha,'** and their texts mentioned three intermediate trading stations: **Dilmun (likely Bahrain on the Persian Gulf), Makan (potentially the Makran coast in Oman), and Meluhha.**

Agriculture

The Harappan civilisation, distinguished as the earliest known civilisation to produce cotton, demonstrated advanced agricultural practices. Referred to as **'Sindon' by the Greeks**, acknowledging its origin in Sindh, the agricultural aspects of the Harappans are noteworthy:

- **Crop Cultivation:** Wheat and barley were staple crops, with wheat being particularly prominent in Mehrgarh. Indus people were the first to produce cotton in the world.
  - Other cultivated crops included horse gram, peas, melons, watermelons, sesame, dates, millets, grapes, henna (mehndi), and garlic.
  - We have evidence of the cultivation of rice in Lothal and Rangpur. We have evidence of mixed cropping from Kalibangan.
  - The main crops, wheat and barley, were cultivated as rabi (winter) crops, and other crops were cultivated as Kharif crops (summer).
  - Fields were not ploughed but dug up with a light-toothed instrument. Indigo was evident from Rojdi in Gujrat.
- **Irrigation System/Flood and Agricultural Activities:** Agricultural activities were synchronised with the seasonal flooding of the Indus River.

Fig. 2.9: Reservoir at Dholavira

  - Seeds were sown in flood plains in November, and the harvest of wheat and barley took place in April, before the onset of the next flood.
  - Well irrigation was known to the people of Alladinho in Sindh. Traces of dams have been found from Dholavira in Gujarat along with evidence of irrigation canals.
- **Agricultural Tools:** Ploughed fields, potentially cultivated with wooden ploughs, were discovered at Kalibangan. Terracotta models of ploughs have been found at Banawali and Bahawalpur.
- **Utilisation of Resources:** Harappans exploited riverine and marine resources, as evidenced by the consumption of **molluscs in the coastal sites of Gujarat.**
- **Artisan class:** There existed specialised groups of artisans such as goldsmiths, silversmiths, bronze-smiths, brick-makers, stone cultures, seal culture, weavers, boat builders, terracotta manufacturers, ivory- workers etc. Harappans were the first to use silver in the world.
- **Animal Husbandry:**
  - The Harappans engaged in extensive animal husbandry, domesticating various animals, including cattle (oxen, buffaloes, goats, humped bulls, sheep, pigs, asses, camels), as well as cats and dogs.
  - While horses were not regularly used, the Harappans were familiar with elephants and rhinoceroses. The Harappan culture was **not centred around horses.**
- **Representation of Wildlife:** Figurines often depicted tigers, and various pottery paintings featured rabbits, peacocks, ducks, pigeons, wildfowl, and monkeys.

- **Faunal Discoveries:** Remains of horses at **Surkotada** and graves containing dogs with men at Ropar have been unearthed, providing insights into the relationship between Harappans and domesticated animals.

These agricultural and zoological practices reveal the complexity and sophistication of the Harappan civilization's approach to sustenance and resource management.

Weights and Measures

- A notable characteristic of the Harappan Culture was its **meticulous standardisation** and precision in weights and measures. The weight system exhibited a binary structure in the lower denominations, progressing as **1, 2, 8, 16, 32 to 64,** and then transitioning to decimal multiples of **160 such as 160, 320, 640, 1600, 3200,** and so forth. Weights were crafted from chert, limestone, and steatite, predominantly taking a cubical form.
- Measures of length were based on the foot (37.6 cm) and the cubit **(ranging from 51.8 to 53.3 cm).** Various measuring instruments have been discovered, including a shell scale at Mohenjo-Daro, a shell object likely used for measuring angles in Saurashtra, and an **ivory scale found at Lothal.** This attention to standardisation and precision in both weights and measures reflects the advanced technological and organisational capabilities of the Harappan civilization.

Trade

The Harappan civilization employed diverse methods to acquire materials for craft production.

- Settlements like **Nageshwar and Balakot** were strategically established in areas abundant with shells.
- Additionally, sites like **Shortughai,** located in distant Afghanistan near prime lapis lazuli sources, were utilised, indicating the high value placed on this blue stone.
- **Lothal**, situated near sources of **carnelian (from Bharuch in Gujarat), steatite (from south Rajasthan and north Gujarat), and metal (from Rajasthan),** exemplifies another approach to securing essential materials.
- A different strategy involved organising expeditions to regions such as the **Khetri area of Rajasthan** for **copper and south India for gold.**
  - These expeditions facilitated communication with local communities, as evidenced by occasional discoveries of Harappan artefacts like steatite micro beads in these regions, suggesting ongoing contact.
  - The Khetri region, in particular, reveals archaeological evidence of the **Ganeshwar-Jodhpura culture,** characterised by distinctive non-Harappan pottery and a noteworthy **abundance of copper objects.**
  - It is plausible that the residents of this region played a role in supplying copper to the Harappans.

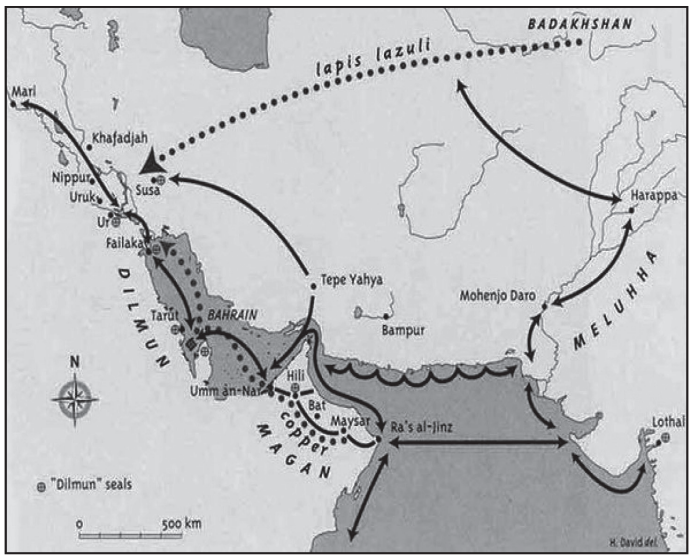


Fig. 2.10: Trade Routes of IVC

Trade with other Countries

- Recent archaeological discoveries indicate that **copper, a crucial material for the Harappans**, may have been sourced from Oman, situated on the southeastern tip of the Arabian Peninsula.
  - Chemical analyses revealing traces of nickel in both Omani copper and Harappan artefacts suggest a common origin.
- Further evidence of contact is observed in the discovery of a distinctive type of vessel—**a large Harappan jar coated with a thick layer of black clay**—at Omani sites.
  - While the specific contents of these vessels remain unknown, it is conceivable that the Harappans engaged in exchanges, possibly involving the vessel contents, for Omani copper.
- Mesopotamian texts from the **third millennium BCE** refer to copper originating from a region known as **Magan,** possibly an ancient name for **Oman.** Interestingly, copper found at Mesopotamian sites also contains traces of nickel. Archaeological findings indicative of long-distance contacts include Harappan seals, weights, dice, and beads.
- Mesopotamian texts further highlight interactions with regions identified as **Dilmun** (possibly the island of **Bahrain), Magan, and Meluhha,** thought to represent the Harappan region. These texts mention products from Meluhha, including **cornelian, lapis lazuli, copper, gold, and various types of wood.**

IGNITE YOUR MIND

In the Harappan age, various seals with diverse shapes, sizes, colors, and geometries were discovered. What was the primary purpose or significance of these Harappan seals?

- In the context of maritime connections, Mesopotamian texts describe **Meluhha as a land of seafarers**, and depictions of ships and boats on seals reinforce the likelihood of sea-based communication with Oman, Bahrain, or Mesopotamia.
- Notably, a Mesopotamian myth associates Meluhha with the haja-bird, possibly the peacock, emphasising the **maritime and cultural connections** between these ancient civilizations.

Key Features of Harappan Trade Networks Includes

- **Internal and External Trade:** Harappans engaged in both internal and external trade. Barter was the prevalent mode of trade, as there was no metallic currency in circulation. **Bullock carts** were the primary means of inland transport.
- **Seals and Trade Connections:** Harappan seals have been discovered in Mesopotamian cities like **Susa and Ur**, underscoring the extent of trade relations. Notably, a seal found in Nippur bore both Harappan script and a unicorn. Ancient sites in the Persian Gulf, such as Failaka and Bahrain, have also yielded Harappan seals.
- **Bead-Making and Export:** Bead-making factories were operational at Chanhudaro and Lothal, producing items for export.
- **Dockyard and Ports:** The excavation of a dockyard in Lothal and the discovery of seaports at Rangpur, Somnath, and Balakot indicate the Harappans' maritime activities and their strategic locations for trade.

Religion

- The Harappan civilization is generally regarded as a secular society, as no single structure qualifying temples has been discovered. Sacred ritual locations included the **Great Bath at Mohenjo-Daro,** where elites likely engaged in ceremonial activities, including ritual bathing.

Fig. 2.11: Fertility Goddess

- While **idolatry was practised,** there is no evidence of temple structures. The Harappan people primarily worshipped the **Mother Goddess, and Pashupati Mahadeva (proto-Shiva),** often depicted in a yogic posture, was revered, especially among the upper class. **Lingam and yoni worship,** associated with the cult of fertility, the Pipal tree, Humped Bull, Birds (dove and pigeon), and One-horned unicorn (maybe the rhinoceros) were also prevalent.

Additional key Inferences about Harappan Religious Practices Include

- **Fire Altars:** Fire altars have been discovered in **Kalibangan and Lothal,** indicating the possible use of fire in religious rituals or ceremonies.
- **Seal of Pashupati Mahadeva:** The seal of Pashupati Mahadeva, a **proto-Shiva deity,** is depicted surrounded by various animals, including an **elephant, a tiger, a rhino, a buffalo, and a deer.** These animals are believed to have held significance in religious worship, suggesting a diverse pantheon.

Fig. 2.12: Pashupati Seal

Burial Practices

- Dead bodies were typically placed in a **north-south direction** and accompanied by various objects such as food, pottery, ornaments, and tools. These items, while significant, were not as elaborate or expensive as those found in contemporary Mesopotamian or Egyptian cultures.

A **linga** is a polished stone that is worshipped as a symbol of Shiva.

- Harappans employed three burial methods, such as **complete burial, fractional burials** (where bones were gathered and buried after exposure to birds and beasts), and **cremation followed by the burial of ashes.**
- In Harappa, coffins containing bodies have been uncovered, reflecting a form of burial practice.

- In **Kalibangan, small circular pits** containing large urns and pottery have been found. Additionally, a triangular terracotta cake with a depiction of a horned deity on one side and an animal being dragged by a human on the other suggests the possibility of animal sacrifice.
- At **Lothal,** the practice of pot burials is sometimes found with a pair of male and female skeletons discovered together, potentially indicating a ritualistic or symbolic significance.However, there is no clear evidence for the practice of Sati.

Fig 2.13: A Harappan Burial

These findings contribute to the understanding of the diverse religious practices within the Harappan civilization, including aspects of animal worship, fire rituals, and various burial methods.

Harappan System of Authority

The evidence of intricate decision-making and its execution in Harappan society is apparent in various aspects, such as the remarkable uniformity seen in Harappan artefacts like pottery, seals, weights, and bricks.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

Was there a religious belief system practiced by the people of the Harappan age, and how can we discern this? Are there any traces or continuations of such religious practices in present-day India?

- Notably, the consistency in the ratio of bricks, despite being produced in diverse centres, spans the entire region from Jammu to Gujarat.
- Additionally, settlements were strategically established in specific locations, and labour was systematically mobilized for brick production, as well as the construction of substantial walls and platforms.

The question arises: **Who organized these activities?**

- Harappans had very efficient and well-organized administrative machinery. There is no clear-cut evidence about the name of the polity. According to **D.D. Kosambi, the priests constituted the ruling class.** According to **R.S. Sharma, the merchants were the ruling class.**
- The precise organizational structure and authority responsible for orchestrating such **widespread uniformity and coordination in construction** efforts remain uncertain.
- The absence of explicit written records or inscriptions makes it challenging to identify a **centralized governing body or figure**. How decisions were made and implemented in Harappan society, including the planning of settlements and the **standardization of artefacts,** remains a subject of scholarly inquiry and speculation.
- While a large building at Mohenjodaro has been designated as a palace by archaeologists, no remarkable discoveries directly associated with it have been made.
- A stone statue, known as the **"priest-king,"** has been labelled based on parallels with Mesopotamian history, where "priest-kings" were recognized. However, the ritual practices of the Harappan civilization remain poorly understood, and it is unclear whether those engaged in these practices also held political authority.
- Differing opinions exist among archaeologists regarding the nature of governance in Harappan society.
  - Some argue that Harappan society had no rulers, positing that everyone enjoyed equal status.
  - Others suggest the possibility of multiple rulers, proposing that Mohenjodaro and Harappa, for example, each had separate rulers.
  - Alternatively, some contend that there was a unified state, pointing to the similarity in artefacts, evidence of planned settlements, standardised brick size ratios, and the strategic location of settlements near raw material sources.
  - Presently, the theory suggesting a single state appears more plausible, considering the coherence in artefacts, the evidence of planned settlements, the consistent brick size ratios, and the establishment of settlements near sources of raw materials.
  - The complexity of the decisions involved in these aspects makes it unlikely that entire communities collectively made and implemented them without some form of centralised governance.

DECLINE

The decline of the Harappan Civilization around 1900 BCE is a complex and debated topic among historians and archaeologists. While no single explanation has been conclusively proven, several theories have been proposed to account for the de-urbanization and the transition from the Mature Harappan phase to the Late Harappan phase. Some possible theories include

Environmental Changes

- Climate change and environmental factors might have played a role. Some evidence suggests that the region experienced a shift in climate patterns, including changes in rainfall patterns and the course of rivers. These environmental shifts could have led to ecological stress and a decline in agricultural productivity.

River Changes

- Alterations in the course of major rivers, such as the Indus, might have affected the availability of water for agriculture and disrupted trade routes. Changes in river patterns could have had a significant impact on the sustainability of Harappan urban centres.

Tectonic Activity

- Tectonic activity, such as earthquakes, may have caused damage to infrastructure and affected the stability of settlements. Evidence of seismic activity has been found in some Harappan sites.

Economic Factors

- Economic factors, including shifts in trade routes or resource depletion, could have contributed to the decline. Changes in trade patterns or a decline in the availability of key resources may have affected the economic foundations of the civilization.

Social and Political Factors

- Internal conflicts, social unrest, or political instability might have contributed to the decline. The breakdown of the centralised authority that characterised the Mature Harappan phase could have led to a loss of cohesion and control.

Disease and Epidemics

- The spread of diseases or epidemics could have had a devastating impact on the population. Increased mortality rates could have weakened the social and economic fabric of the civilization.

Cultural Transformations

- Changes in cultural practices, religious beliefs, or social structures might have played a role. Cultural shifts or the assimilation of new populations, could have led to the transformation of Harappan society.

Cause	Historian
Aryan Invasion	Wheeler, Gordon
Ecological disturbance	Fairchild
Change in River course	Dales, M.S. Vatsa, H.T.Lambrick
Low Rainfall	Stein
Flood	Macay, S.R. Rao
Drying of Ghaghar and Increasing Aridity	D.P. Aggarwal and Sood
Earthquake	Raikes and Dales
Natural Calamities	K.A.R. Kennedy

Table 2.1: Theories for Decline of Mature Phase of IVC

It's important to note that these theories are not mutually exclusive, and a combination of several factors might have contributed to the decline of the Harappan Civilization. The lack of a single, clear explanation highlights the complexity of understanding ancient societal collapses. Ongoing archaeological research may provide further insights into the factors that led to the **de-urbanization of the Harappan civilization**.

THIRD PHASE: LATE HARAPPAN 1900-1300 BCE

The **Late Harappan phase**, succeeding the Mature Harappan phase, witnessed a notable transformation characterised by the decline of urban life and a shift toward diversified agriculture. This period exhibited a complex interplay of change and continuity, with a departure from the earlier stylistic homogeneity of the Harappan civilization.

Key features of the Late Harappan phase

- **Decline of Urbanism:** Urban life experienced a decline, with elements such as seals, specialized crafts, cities, and long-distance trade diminishing. However, some urban centres like Kudwala in Cholistan, Bet Dwarka in Gujarat, and Daimabad persisted.

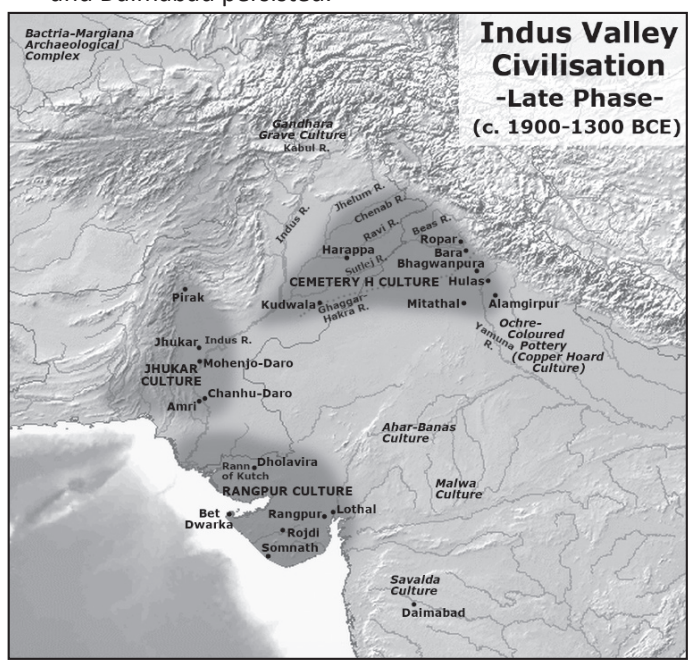


Fig. 2.14: Map of IVC Late Phase

- **Shift to Agriculture:** A significant development was the introduction of double cropping, where wheat and barley were grown as winter crops, and rice, millets, and sorghum were grown as summer crops.
- **Sub-Indus Culture:** The declining culture of this phase is sometimes referred to as sub-Indus culture, reflecting a departure from the earlier Harappan characteristics.
- **Chalcolithic Nature of Rural Settlements:** Rural settlements in this phase primarily exhibited Chalcolithic characteristics, highlighting a shift away from urban centres.
- **Economic Activities:** Post-urban Harappans lived in villages, engaging in agriculture, stock-raising, hunting, and fishing as their primary economic activities.
- **Changes in Pottery:** Painted Harappan pottery was replaced by less intricate designs and painted grey ware (PGW). Human figurines were notably absent, and the pottery itself was less vibrant, thicker, and sturdier. Unique Harappan shapes, such as perforated jars and s-shaped jars, disappeared.
- **Absence of Length Measurement Objects:** No objects for measuring length were noticed during this period.
- **End of West Asian Trade:** Late Harappan marks the conclusion of Harappan trade with West Asian centres. Trade items like lapis lazuli, chert, carnelian beads, and copper and bronze vessels became either absent or scarce.

- **Important Late Harappan Sites:** Important sites from this phase include **Prabhas Patan (Somnath), Rangpur (Gujarat), Swat Valley, Manda in Jammu, Sanghol in Punjab, Daulatpur in Haryana, Alamgirpur and Hulas in Uttar Pradesh.**

The Late Harappan phase represents a dynamic period of cultural transformation, characterized by the decline of the once-flourishing Harappan civilization and the emergence of new regional cultures with distinct features.

Evidence of an "invasion"

Deadman Lane is a narrow alley, varying from 3 to 6 feet in width. At the point where the lane turns westward, part of a skull and the bones of the thorax and upper arm of an adult was discovered, all in very friable condition, at a depth of 4 ft 2 in. The body lay on its back diagonally across the lane. Fifteen inches to the west were a few fragments of a tiny skull. It is to these remains that the lane owes its name.

-From **John Marshall,** Mohenjodaro and the Indus Civilisation, 1931.

Sixteen skeletons of people with the ornaments that they were wearing when they died were found in the same part of Mohenjodaro in 1925. Much later, in 1947, R.E.M. Wheeler, then Director-General of the ASI, tried to correlate this archaeological evidence with that of the Rigveda, the earliest known text in the subcontinent. He wrote:

The Rigveda mentions pur, meaning rampart, fort or stronghold. Indra, the Aryan war god is called **Purandara, the fort-destroyer**. Where are – or were – these citadels? It has in the past been supposed that they were mythical. The recent excavation of Harappa may be thought to have changed the picture. Here we have a highly evolved civilisation of essentially non- Aryan type, now known to have employed massive fortifications. What destroyed this firmly settled civilisation? Climatic, economic or political deterioration may have weakened it, but its ultimate extinction is more likely to have been completed by deliberate and large-scale destruction. It may be no mere chance that at a later period of Mohenjodaro men, women, and children appear to have been massacred there. On circumstantial evidence, Indra stands accused.

-From **R.E.M. Wheeler,** "Harappa 1946", Ancient India, 1947.

In the 1960s, the evidence of a massacre in Mohenjodaro was questioned by an archaeologist named George Dales. He demonstrated that the skeletons found at the site did not belong to the same period:

Whereas a couple of them definitely seem to indicate a slaughter, … the bulk of the bones were found in contexts suggesting burials of the sloppiest and most irreverent nature. There is no destruction level covering the latest period of the city, no sign of extensive burning, no bodies of warriors clad in armour and surrounded by the weapons of war. The citadel, the only fortified part of the city, yielded no evidence of a final defence.

-From **G.F. Dales,** "The Mythical Massacre at Mohenjodaro", Expedition, 1964.

Thus it can be concluded that a careful re-examination of the data can sometimes lead to a reversal of earlier interpretations.

FAMOUS HARAPPAN SITES

Site	State	River	Excavator	Specialty
Harappa	Pakistan (Punjab)	Ravi	Dayaram Sahini (1921)	**Two rows of six granaries.** Evidence of coffin burial and cemetery 'H' culture Single room barracks. **Two red stone idols of a dancing girl and a naked bust of male, and female genitalia.** Evidence of direct trade interaction with Mesopotamia. Post Cremation burials are numerous.
Mohenjo-Daro "Mound of the dead"	Pakistan (Sindh)	Indus	R. D. Banerji (1922) E. Makay, Kashinath Dixit, Sir John Marshall (1930)	Multi-pillared Assembly Hall. Great Bath (public venue) College of Priests. Large granary, piece of woven cotton cloth. Superficial evidence of Horse. **Bronze dancing girl** Violent death of some inhabitants (discovery of human skeletons together). The seal represents the Mother Goddess, Pashupati, a bearded man and a woman to be sacrificed. Evidence of ship/big boat. Bangles of clay.

Site	State	River	Excavator	Specialty
Lothal	Gujarat (Ahmedabad District, at the head of the Gulf of Cambay)	Bhogava and Sabarmati river confluence	S.R. Rao (1957)	Dockyard, an important sea trade Centre and beadmaking. **Factory Town** is not divided into two sectors. The city was divided into six sectors and each section was built on a wide platform of unique brick. Remains of rice husks. Houses with entrances on the main street (houses of all other sites had side entries). Painting on a jar resembling the story of the cunning fox in Panchatantra. Evidence of double burial (male and female together). Brick-built tank-like structure Seal from Mesopotamia found here, Ivory scale found here. **A terracotta model of the ship** has been found. The lower part of the city is walled Fire altars.
Kalibangan "Black Bangles"	Rajasthan (Ganganagar)	Ghaggar	Amlanand Ghosh (1953) Dr B. B. Lal and B. K. Thapar (1961)	**Ploughed field and Fire altars** show the practice of cult of sacrifice. Remains of a massive brick wall around both the citadel and lower town. Bones of camels. Not as well planned and organised as Mohenjo-Daro, did not even have a drainage System. Burials in circular and rectangular graves. Provides evidence of pre-Harappan civilisation at the lower layer of excavation and maturity. Harappan at the upper layer of excavation. Decorative bricks are used in flooring only at this site.
Chanhu-Daro	Pakistan (Sindh), near Mohenjo-Daro	Indus	N.G. Mazumdar (1931) and E. Makay	Remains of both pre-Harappan and Mature Harappan culture. **Bead factory** site, as lots of beads, seals, and ornaments unearthed. Residents were good craftsmen. Not fortified Structure, Only Harappan city without a citadel. Evidence of Human sacrifice. Clay model of four wheeler Bronze model of the roofed chariot.
Rangpur (Near Lothal)	Gujarat	Madar River	M.S. Vatsa (1931) S.R. Rao (1953-54)	Remains of both pre-Harappan and Mature Harappan culture Flakes. Yellow and grey colour pots of pre-Harappan people.
Banawali (Hisar)	Haryana	Rangoi	R.S. Bist (1973–74)	Centre of pre-Harappan, Mature Harappan as well as Late Harappan civilisation. High-quality barley. **Ceramics, steatite seal,Fire altars, a Clay model of the plough.** Seals are found only in lower towns and not in the citadel.
Alamgirpur	Meerut (UP)	Hindon	Y.D. Sharma (1958)	Late- Harappan culture. Impression of cloth on a trough. Pottery and beads.
Koti-Diji	Sindh (Pakistan)	Sindh	Ghurey (1835) Fazal Ahmed (1955)	Pre-Harappan site House made of stone City destroyed by force.

Site	State	River	Excavator	Specialty
Amri	Sindh (Pakistan)	Sindh	N.G. Majumdar (1929)	Pre-Harappan settlement. The transitional culture between pre and post-Harappa culture. Actual remains of the rhinoceros, A trace of jhangar culture in the Late Harappan Fire altars.
Ropar	Punjab (India)	Sutlej	Y.D. Sharma (1955–56)	Cemetery, seal, earthen pot. Buildings are mainly of stone and soil. Evidence of burying dogs below humans.
Surkotada	Gujarat (Bhuj)		J.P. Joshi (1964)	Bones of horse and graveyard.
Suktagendor	Sindh (Pakistan) Balochistan	Dasht/ Dashak River	A Stein, George Dales	Ash filled pot, copper axe, earthen bangles & Pottery. Originally a port but later cut off from sea due to coastal uplift. Had trade links with Babylon.
Dholavira	Gujarat		J.P. Joshi (1990–91)	**Giant water reservoir.** Unique water harvesting System. It is well known for its elaborate system of water harvesting and management by building a series of dams and channelising water into connected reservoirs. An Inscription comprising ten large-sized signs of the Harappan script similar to a signboard. Shows all three phases of Harappan Culture. Large-scale use of sandstone along with mud brick.
Rakhigarhl (Near Hisar), Bhirrana (Fatehgarh)	Haryana			Over 350 hectares with new finds of two additional mounds, making it the largest Indus Valley Civilisation site and town in the world. Shows all three phases of Harappan Culture. At Bhirrana fragmented artefact of a thick, sturdy red ware with an incised female figure has been found, with a pose similar to the bronze Mohenjo-Daro 'dancing girl'.

Some Important Information

- **Burzahom:** At Burzahom, Kashmir valley, tools made of bones and stones and tools representing the ritualistic practices were found. It represents the natural setting of the Neolithic people.
- **Chandraketugarh:** Several terracotta artefacts have been unearthed at Chandraketugarh, including erotic art on the plaques.
- **Ganeshwar-Jodhpur:** At the sites of Ganeshwar-Jodhpur near the Khetri copper mines, several copper artefacts were excavated, viz., arrowheads, spearheads, bangles, pottery and chisels etc. Ganeshwar had mainly supplied copper objects to Harappa. The archaeological site was named after the present-day village, Gilund, and is locally known as Modiya Magari, which means "bald habitation mound".

CONCLUSION

The name "Indus Valley Civilization" was derived from the Indus River system, as the early sites of this civilization were discovered and excavated on the alluvial plains surrounding it. This ancient civilization, commonly known as the Harappan Civilization, holds profound significance not only for historians and archaeologists but also for everyday individuals.

Its **urban design, architectural marvels, artistic achievements,** and the **intricate understanding of social, religious, and economic structures** represent some of the most striking features unearthed from this era. The layout and architectural elements of the Harappan civilization's urban centres have been subjects of extensive study, showcasing the sophistication and meticulous planning of this ancient society.

The Vedic Period (c. 1500 BCE - 500 BCE)

3

In the vast expanse of the Indian subcontinent, a period of profound cultural and historical significance dawned around 1500 BCE, marking the inception of what scholars identify as the Early Vedic Period. This era, encapsulated within the pages of ancient scriptures known as the **Vedas**, laid the cornerstone for the multifaceted dimensions of Indian civilization.

Rig Veda composers describe themselves as Arya, a cultural/ethnic term etymologically derived from 'ar' meaning to cultivate, literally meaning kinsmen or companion. In Sanskrit, it means favourably disposed newcomers, and later it implied men of good family 'noble').

The age is called the Vedic Age, as its reconstruction is primarily based on using Vedic texts as sources. However, archaeological sources have also supplemented the texts. During the Vedic period, a significant technological advancement marked the transition from the **Bronze Age to the Iron Age**, ushering in a new era of metallurgy.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

What constitutes the term "Aryans"? Was it utilized to denote a migratory group, a distinct race, or a type of metal?

THE ARRIVAL OF ARYANS - THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

There are different perspectives regarding the debate on the original home of Aryans. There is still no consensus on the original home of Aryans and different theories are postulated which further continue the debate. The different theories are as follows:

European Theory

- **Aryan Origin through Comparative Linguistics:** This theory posits that Aryans had their homeland in Europe, specifically the plains north of the **Black Sea in Eastern Europe.**
  - Comparative linguistic analysis involves studying structural similarities and cognates among words in **Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, German, Gothic, and Celtic** languages.

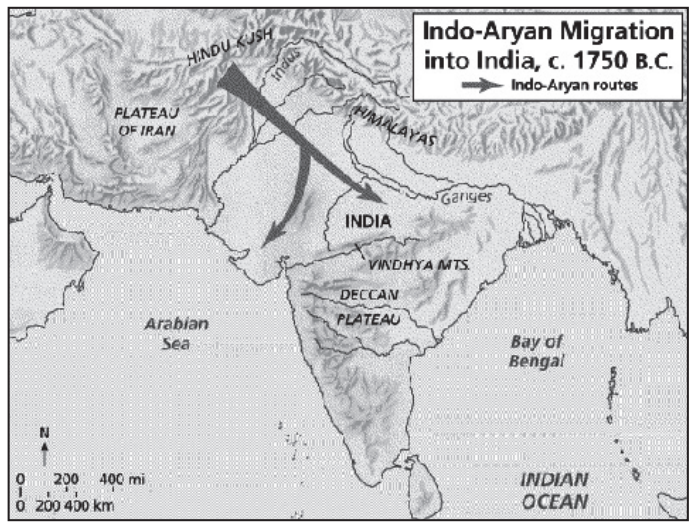


Fig. 3.1: Aryan Migration

  - Notable resemblances, such as between Sanskrit **"matri"** and **"pitri"** and their Latin equivalents **"mater"** and **"pater,"** contribute to the linguistic evidence supporting the theory.
- **Indo-Aryan Migration Theory:** The theory suggests that the Indo-Aryans, identified through linguistic connections, undertook a migration journey from Eastern Europe to the Indian subcontinent. The genetic signals that pass from generation to generation in human beings link together speakers of Indo-European languages. A genetic marker called M17 which prevails in 40% of Central Asian steppes is also found frequently in the Indo Aryan speakers. This suggests the migration of the Indo-Aryans from Central Asia.
  - Various scholars propose different migration routes, including paths through **Hungary, France, the steppes of South Russia, and Western Siberia.**
- **Mapping Migration Routes:** Scholars like **Sir William Jones, Giles, Shroeder, P. Nehring, and Morgan** have engaged in mapping potential routes taken by the Indo-Aryans during their semi-nomadic journey across Eurasia.
  - This mapping highlights the interconnectedness between the cultures of ancient India and Europe, emphasizing shared linguistic roots and suggesting a common heritage.
- **Ongoing Exploration and Refinement:** While these theories offer valuable insights, the details of the Aryan migration remain a subject of ongoing exploration and refinement within the scholarly community.

- The complex and dynamic nature of ancient human movements across vast geographical spaces is underscored by the continuous efforts to understand and elucidate the specifics of the Aryan migration.

Other Important Perspectives
The Central Asian Theory: It was given by **Max Muller.** The ancestral home of the Aryans is Central Asia. Comparing the "Avesta" (an Iranian text) with the "Vedas," one discovers remarkable linguistic similarity between their ideas as well as words. The similarity of the letters "h" and "s" and the remarkable constancy in this transformation in the hepta Hindu (sapta sindhu), Ahura (asura), daha (dasa), and haoma (soma) further support the assertion.
The Arctic Region Theory: It was given by **Bal Gangadhar Tilak**. Homeland is the Northern Arctic region, as the Vedas describe six months of long days and nights, each of which occurs exclusively in the Arctic.
Tibet Theory: This was given by **Swami Dayanand Saraswati**. Tibet is the original home of the Aryans with reference to the Vedas and other Aryan texts.

Indian Theory

- **Indigenous Origins in Vedic Literature:** Explicit literary evidence within the Vedas strongly asserts the indigenous origins of the Aryans in the Indian subcontinent.
  - The Vedas, particularly referencing the **Sapta Sindhu,** depict the region of seven rivers as the ancestral homeland of the Aryans, showcasing a profound cultural and geographical connection.
- **Sanskrit and Linguistic Continuity:** Sanskrit, the language of the Vedas, plays a crucial role in supporting indigenous roots, containing the largest number of original Indo-European words.
- **Linguistic Richness in Sanskrit:** suggests substantial historical and cultural contact, reinforcing the deep-seated ties between the Aryans and the Indian subcontinent.
- **Vedic Rituals and Geographical Data:** Analysis of Vedic sacrificial rituals aligning with Indian traditions provides compelling evidence for the Aryans' Indian origin.
  - Geographical data in the Rig Veda intricately fits the topography of Punjab, with river hymns explicitly naming rivers in the region, emphasizing a close connection with the Indian subcontinent.
- **Contributions of Scholars to Indigenous Perspective: Scholars like Dr. Sampurnanand, A.C. Das, Ganganath Jha, L.D. Kala and R.B. Pandey** contribute to consolidating the perspective of indigenous Aryan roots in regions like Sapta Sindhu and Brahmarishi Desa.
- **Indo-Aryan Migrations and Archaeological Evidence:** The prevailing perspective suggests a series of Indo-Aryan immigration rather than an outright invasion, shaping the demographic landscape of the Indian subcontinent.
  - Archaeological evidence from the **Andronovo culture in Southern Siberia** supports migrations north of the **Hindukush**, with artefacts indicating movement from Central Asian territories to South Asia.

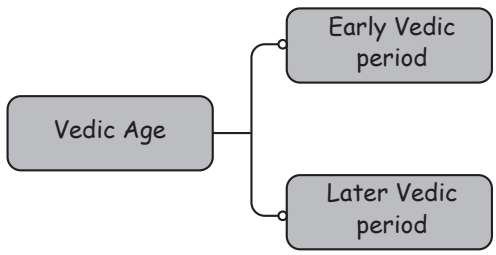
IGNITE YOUR MIND

How might advancements in astronomical knowledge and climatology help validate or challenge Bal Gangadhar Tilak's proposition that the Vedas' description of prolonged days and nights exclusively aligns with the seasonal phenomena observed in the Arctic region?

- **Early Aryan Residency in Sapta Sindhu:** The earliest Aryans inhabited the Sapta Sindhu region, strategically using **horse-drawn chariots** and advanced military technology to establish political dominance.
  - This region, fed by seven rivers, covered eastern Afghanistan, Punjab, and western Uttar Pradesh, with limited mentions of Yamuna and Ganga in the Rig Veda suggesting Aryan settlements hadn't extended to those regions during that period.

THE VEDIC AGE AND FEATURES

The Vedic Age is generally divided into two parts. This division unveils the nuanced evolution of Vedic society and culture.



Early Vedic Age/Rigvedic Age (C. 1500-1000 BCE)

The early Vedic Period was a time when the foundations of Vedic literature were laid, providing glimpses into the religious, social, and cultural practices of the ancient Aryans. The nomadic lifestyle, pastoral economy, and ritualistic fervour are some features that characterized the early Vedic civilization.

Different features are discussed as follows:

Polity

- **Tribal Chief and Kingship:** In the Rig Vedic period, the administrative machinery revolved around the tribal chief known as the **"Rajan,"** whose leadership in warfare earned him the central position.
  - The king's post was generally **hereditary,** the king was called as 'Gopajanasya',i.e., the protector of the

tribe and its cattle and not the ruler of any specific territory. Although traces of election by the tribal assembly, the **"samiti,"** are evident.

- The king, regarded as the protector of his tribe, assumed responsibilities such as **safeguarding cattle, leading wars, and offering prayers** on behalf of the community.

❑ **Tribal Assemblies:** Various tribal assemblies, including the **sabha, samiti, vidatha, and gana,** played crucial roles in the Rig Vedic political landscape. These assemblies performed deliberative, military, and religious functions, with women even participating in the sabha and vidatha.

- The sabha and samiti were particularly influential, and kings sought their support for political legitimacy.

Sabha	→ Smaller body meant for elites (exclusive body).
Samiti	→ Broad-based folk assembly, presided over by the Rajan
Vidatha	→ Tribal assembly with diverse functions.
Gana	→ Assembly or troop

❑ **Administrative Functionaries:** Day-to-day administration involved key functionaries assisting the king. The **"purohita,"** a significant figure, played a vital role, while priests such as **Vasishtha** and **Visvamitra** inspired tribal chiefs through praise and received rewards.

- The "senani," equipped with weapons, also held importance in the administration.
- Notably, there is **no mention of officers for tax collection** or administering justice in the Rig Veda.

Important functionaries were:

❑ Purohit (priest)
❑ Senani (leader of an army)
❑ Gramini (leader of a village)

❑ **Local Authority Figures:** Some officials were associated with territories, like the **"vrajapati,"** who had authority over pasture grounds and led tribal units to battle. Over time, the **"gramani,"** initially the head of a tribal fighting unit, evolved into the head of settled villages and became identified with the vrajapati.

❑ **Military Structure and Lack of Territorial Administration:** The king did not maintain a regular army but relied on a militia, comprising different tribal groups such as **viata, gana, grama, and sardha, during times of war.**

- The absence of a civil system or territorial administration can be attributed to the perpetual migration and expansion of the population from one area to another during this tribal-centric governance system in the Rig Vedic period.

❑ **Battle of the Ten Kings:** The Dasarajna or the battle of the Ten Kings, is an important historical event which took place on the banks of the Parushni (Ravi) river. The Bharata ruling clan was opposed by a host of ten chiefs, five of whom were heads of Aryan tribes and the remaining five of the non-Aryan people. The battle that Bharatas fought with the host of ten chiefs is known as the Battle of Ten Kings.

- In this battle, Sudas, the son of Divodas and the Bharata king of Tritsu family, fought with and won over an alliance of ten tribes of which five were Aryan and another five were non-Aryan. In this battle, Purukutsa, the leader of the ten tribes was killed.
- This battle broke out because of a dispute between Vasishta, the priest of the Bharatas and Visvamitra, the priest who supported the ten tribes.
- Another issue that sparked the conflict was the division of the waters of the Parushni.

The Aryans were engaged in two types of Battles, With pre-Aryans (probably referred to them as Dasas/Dasyus) and amongst themselves.

Dasrajana Battle: A battle occurred between a Bharata King Divodasa (winner), and Dasa ruler Shambara.

The 'battle of ten kings'(Dasharajna): This was fought between the Bharata chief Sudas, grandson of Divodasa (winner) on one side, and ten other tribes, including the famous five tribes (Panch-jana), namely, the Yadu, Turvasha, Puru, Anu, and Druhyu. Later, the Bharatas joined hands with the Purus to form the Kuru tribe.

Society

There were social divisions in early Vedic society that were primarily shaped by the conquests of the Aryans over indigenous populations. The non-Aryans consisted of **dasas, dasyus and panis.** There was active hostility towards the dasyus and it was more distinct than towards the dasa. Panis were the trading community with lot of cattle wealth and were despised by the Aryans.

❑ **Social Stratification and Division in Early Vedic Society:** Rigveda society is a tribal society. The Rig Veda shows some consciousness of the physical appearance of people in the north-western part of India in about 1500- 1000 B.C.

- Varna as used in the Rig Veda means colour. The Rig Veda speaks about Arya varna (Aryans) and dasa varna (non-Aryans), where possibly the distinction was based on colour.
- The **dasas and dasyus**, conquered by the Aryans, were relegated to the status of slaves and shudras. This created a hierarchy where tribal chiefs and priests enjoyed elevated positions, leading to social inequalities.
- The tribal society of the Rig Vedic period is broadly divided into **three groups: priests, warriors and the people.** The fourth division called the **Shudras**

appeared towards the **end of the Rig Vedic period,** because the term Shudra is mentioned for the first time in the tenth book of the Rig Veda, which is the latest addition.

- Untouchability is unknown in the Rig Vedic period.

❑ **Social Units and Family Structure:** The social units such as **the kula (family) and vis (clan)** existed. The Rig Vedic society predominantly consisted of joint families adhering to a patrilineal system. Families were integral components of larger groupings known as **clans**, which collectively formed **janas or tribes**—the most extensive social units. Women played crucial roles, being educated, composing hymns, and participating in assemblies.

❑ **Gender Relations and Marriage Practices:** The society was patriarchal, as instances of women slaves being employed for domestic purposes. Marriage practices ranged from monogamy to occasional instances of polygyny and polyandry.

- There was the absence of child marriage, sati, or purdah, and also the instances of levirate and widow remarriage were noticed.
- The concept of 'Gotra' did not arise in the Rig Vedic period. The institution of Gotra became established in later vedic times. So people in the Rig Vedic period married irrespective of the concept of Gotra.

Family and Kinship

❑ **Kinship as the Basis of Social Structure:** Kinship formed the foundation of the Rig Vedic social structure, and individuals were identified by the clan to which they belonged. The names of Rig Vedic kings often reflected their clan affiliations.

- Primary loyalty was directed towards the tribe, known as **'Jana,'** with the term occurring approximately 275 times in the Rig Veda.
- Notably, the term **'janapada'** or territory is absent, indicating a strong attachment to the tribe in the absence of an established kingdom.

❑ **Tribal Units and Warfare:** The term **'vis'** represented the tribe and occurred 170 times in the Rig Veda. The vis was likely divided into smaller tribal units called **'grama,'** which engaged in conflict, leading to **'samgrama'** or war. The **vaisya varna**, the most numerous, likely originated from the vis, representing the mass of tribal people.

❑ **Family Structure:** The term for family, **'kula,'** was infrequently mentioned in the Rig Veda. Instead, the term **'griha'** was used, indicating a large joint family comprising not only parents and children but also extended relatives.

- The family structure was **patriarchal,** with multiple generations living under the same roof.
- The **birth of sons** was highly desired in this patriarchal society, as reflected in prayers for brave sons to engage in warfare.

❑ **Role of Women:** The birth of daughters was not desired, but once they were born, they were treated with kindness and consideration. Their education was not neglected and some of them even composed hymns and rose to the rank of seers. Women played active roles in Rig Vedic society. They could attend assemblies and participate in sacrifices alongside their husbands.

❑ **Marriage Institution:** The institution of marriage was established in Rig Vedic society, albeit with some symbols of primitive practices. Instances of proposals for love relations, like **Yami's** proposal resisted by **Yama,** and indications of polyandry are present.

- The practice of **levirate** and **widow remarriage** reflects the flexibility of the marriage institution during this period.
- The practise of **Niyoga** existed. Niyoga was a variant of widow remarriage in which a young childless widow was temporarily married to her husband's brother for the purpose of producing children. There was no stigma attached to Niyoga
- The absence of child marriage aligns with a typical marriageable age of 16 to 17 in the Rig Veda.

Religion

The Early Vedic period did not include temples or idol worship. Naturalistic polytheism, which is comparable to **prehistoric animism,** is reflected in the Rig Veda, where natural forces such as the **wind, rain, water, thunder,** etc. are worshipped.

The deities of the temple were hardly worshipped. Typically, they used **yajnas** to worship outdoors. Vedic literature mentions eating meat and killing animals as sacrifices, except for the cow, which was regarded as **aghnya** (not to be killed). The religion of the Rig Veda has a peculiar form of **Henotheism** or **Kathenotheism** in which the god invoked in a particular hymn is regarded as the highest god.

❑ **Anthropomorphism in Rig Vedic Religion:** The Rig Vedic people, facing the mysteries of natural phenomena, personified forces such as **rains, the sun, the moon, rivers, and mountains**, attributing human or animal qualities to them. The hymns in the Rig Veda are dedicated to a multitude of divinities, embodying various aspects of nature.

❑ **Principal Deities:**

- **Indra:** The primary divinity in the Rig Veda, often referred to as **Purandara** or the breaker of forts. Indra played a significant role as a **warlord**, leading Aryan soldiers to victory against demons. He is also considered the **rain god** responsible for rainfall, with **250 hymns** dedicated to him.
- **Agni:** The **fire god,** holding a crucial role in the primitive society's life due to its use in burning forests and cooking. Agni served as an **intermediary between gods and people,** with **200 hymns** devoted to him.

- **Varuna: Personifying water,** Varuna was believed to uphold the **natural order.** Events in the world were thought to reflect his desires.

Other Important Deities:

- **Yama:** Lord of Death.
- **Rudra:** A moral archer god whose arrows brought diseases. He lived in the mountains and was the guardian of healing herbs. He resembled the **Greek God Apollo** and was identified as **Protosiva**.
- **Pushan:** The **god of jungle paths, herdsmen, and cattle** and aided the transformation of day to night and vice versa.
- **Surya:** Son of Dyaus, who drives away darkness and spreads light.
- **Savitri:** Solar deity to whom the famous **Gayatri Mantra** is attributed in the third Mandal of the Rig Veda.
- **Aditi:** Goddess of eternity and the mother of the gods, invoked to bestow freedom from evil, harm, and sickness.
- **Prithvi:** Earth goddess.
- **Vishnu:** Benevolent god, but mentioned very infrequently in the Rigveda.
- **Vayu:** God of wind.
- **Ashvins:** The twin Gods of war and fertility.
- **Usha:** Goddess of dawn, and is mentioned around **300** times in the Rig Veda hymns.
- **Sinivali:** Bestowed children.

- **Soma and Maruts:** Soma was considered the god of plants, associated with an intoxicating drink named after him. Hymns in the Rig Veda explain the preparation of this drink from unidentified plants.
  - While Maruts personified storms, representing a force of nature. Numerous gods in the Rig Veda embodied various natural forces and were also attributed to human-like activities.
- **Female Divinities:** Some female divinities, such as **Aditi and Ushas,** represented the appearance of dawn. While present, they were not as prominent in the patriarchal setup of the Rig Vedic period, where male gods held greater importance.

Demi-gods:

- Gandharvas (Divine musicians)
- Apasaras (Mistress of Gods)
- Vishwadevas (Intermediate deities)
- Aryaman (Guardian of compacts and marriages)

- **Modes of Worship:** The dominant mode of worship involved the **recitation of prayers and offering sacrifices**. Prayers played a crucial role, with both collective and individual prayers being offered. Initially, each tribe or clan worshipped a specific god. Tribes collectively offered prayers, and sacrifices were made to gods like Agni and Indra. Offerings included vegetables, barley, etc. However, the rituals and sacrificial formulas seen in later Vedic times were not present during the Rig Vedic period.
- **Purpose of Worship:** In the Rig Vedic era, people worshipped gods primarily for **worldly gains, seeking blessings for children, cattle, food, wealth, and health.** The focus was on practical, material aspects of life rather than spiritual upliftment or alleviation of existential miseries.

Economy

- **Dominant Economic Activity:** The Rig Vedic society centred around a **pastoral economy**, with cattle rearing as the predominant activity. Wealth was primarily measured in terms of cattle, and a prosperous individual was known as a **Gomat,** signifying ownership of numerous cattle.
  - The term **'gau,'** meaning cow, had significant linguistic influence, indicating the central role of cattle in their economic system.
  - The terms for war in the Rig Veda is **gavishti or the search for cows.** Most of the wars were fought for the sake of cows. People also fought for possession of good grazing grounds. Prayers were made for increase in the cattle wealth.

Terms used in Rig Vedic Age and their Meaning

- Godhuli Samgava - Measure of time (Dusk) Morning
- Gavyuti - Measure of distance
- Duhitri - Daughter who milks cows
- Gotra - Kinship Units
- Vish - Clan/people in general
- Gana - Lineage
- Grama - Village
- Gauri/gavala - Buffalo
- Gojit - Winner of cows/Hero
- Vap - To sow
- Srini - Sickle
- Ksehtra - Cultivated field
- Urvara - Fertile fields
- Dhanya - Cereals
- Ghrita - Butter
- Soma/Sura - Intoxicating drink
- Goghna - Guest; one who is fed on cattle

- **Trade and Commerce:** Evidence of trade and commerce is scant in the Rig Vedic society. Notably, there was no concept of private property based on land ownership. The clan collectively held rights over resources, and barter served as the primary model of exchange.

- Panis were non-Aryans involved in barter (pan). They were much criticised in the Rig Veda for stealing cows and thereby amassing huge cattle wealth
- Cattle played a crucial role as a unit of value in these transactions. The unit of currency, **niskha,** was made of gold. However, clear evidence of trade is lacking in the Rig Veda, and the extent of Aryan familiarity with the sea or ocean remains uncertain.
- The absence of clear references to cities suggests a lifestyle centred around fortified mud settlements, yet to be definitively identified by archaeologists.

❑ **Revenue System and Economic Exchange:** The Rig Vedic society lacked a regular revenue system, relying instead on voluntary tribute **(Bali)** from subjects and the spoils won in battles to sustain the kingdom.
- Economic transactions were characterized by gift exchange and redistribution at the group level, known as **'presentations.'** These exchanges encompassed economic goods, as well as non-material items like women, courtesies, hospitality, and military assistance.
- Priests received **dana** (gifts) and **Dakshina** (sacrificial offerings) for their ritualistic services.

❑ **Agriculture Practices: Shifting agriculture** was practised in Rig Vedic society, where fire was used to clear forest cover, and the cleared patch was then sown. **Barley (yava)** was the primary grain mentioned. In the early Vedic period, agriculture was secondary to pastoralism.
- The cultivated field was known as kshetra, and ploughing was known as Krishi.
- The Rig Veda mentions only one food grain called 'Yava' which in later times had the specific sense of barley but in Rigveda it is the common name for any food grain. Cotton, Rice, Wheat are nowhere mentioned in the Rigveda
- The people used wooden **ploughs (phala, langala, and 'sira')** in their agricultural practices.
- Furrous were known as Sita, though later on Sita came to signify wealth produced on land. Rig Veda also provides references of ploughed fields, stone pulley wheels and irrigation channels.
- References to the Vedic god Indra as **Urvarajit** (winner of fertile fields) and **Kshetrapati** (guardian deity of agricultural fields) suggest the importance of agriculture in their economic life.

❑ **Metal Technology Development:**
- Although **iron technology was not employed,** they were familiar with copper, and there were limited references to metallurgical activities.
- The use of copper, possibly supplied by the **Khetri** mines in Rajasthan, is suggested, although there's limited archaeological evidence for bronze artefacts.
- 'Ajas' is the common metal having the colour of Sun or fire and is used to refer to copper or bronze. It does not indicate Iron. Hiranya or gold is mentioned as obtained from river sands.
- **The spoked wheel** mentioned in the Rig Veda is a new development. The smelting of metals was known, and metal smellers were called **'Karmar'.**

❑ **Pottery:** The Rig Vedic Aryans used copper hordes and their predominant pottery type is Ochre Coloured Pottery (OCP), though Black and Red ware type of pottery was also known to them.

❑ **Crafts and Recreational Activities:** Rig Vedic society encompassed various crafts, including cart-making, carpentry, tanning, sewing, and weaving. Among these, the chariot-maker held a special status in their societal hierarchy.
- Additionally, recreational activities such as **chariot racing and dice gambling** found popularity among the Rig Vedic people, providing insights into their leisure and entertainment practices.

Recent excavations, notably at **Bhagwanpura in Haryana** and three sites in Punjab, revealed **Painted Grey Ware (PGW)** alongside **'late Harappan' pottery.** Dating from 1600 B.C. to 1000 B.C., this period aligns roughly with the Rig Vedic era. The geographical coincidence of these sites with the Rig Veda's representation is noteworthy. The absence of iron objects and cereals at these sites suggests a pre-iron phase of PGW that potentially coincided with the Rig Vedic phase. Notably, a thirteen-roomed mud house at Bhagwanpura raises questions about the societal structure, possibly indicating a dwelling for a large extended family or a tribal chief. Cattle bones found in abundance at these sites reinforce the pastoral aspect of their lifestyle.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

How do the geographical references found within the Rig Veda, particularly the detailed descriptions of Punjab's topography and specific river hymns, provide insights into the intimate connection between the Aryans and the Indian subcontinent, and what implications might these connections hold for historical interpretations?

LATER VEDIC AGE (C. 1000-500 BCE)

In the later Vedic period, the Aryans made even more progress eastward. The spread of the Aryans to the eastern Gangetic plains is mentioned in the **Satapatha Brahmana**. The expansion of vast kingdoms is one significant development that occurred during this time. The Kuru and Panchala kingdoms were initially prosperous. Janamejaya and Parikshit were the well-known Kuru kingdom kings. **Pravahana Jaivali** was a well-liked Panchala king. He supported education.

Following Kurus and Panchalas' downfall, other kingdoms such as Kosala, Kasi, and Videha gained prominence. The three divisions of India, Aryavarta (Northern India), Madhyadesa (Central India), and Dakshinapatha (Southern India), are also mentioned in the later Vedic texts.

Geographical Extent

The later Vedic texts, including the Vedas and associated literature, were compiled in the upper **Gangetic basin** around 1000-600 BC. This literature acts as a source of information about the geographical extent of this period. During this period, nearly 500 **Painted grey ware (PGW) sites** emerged in the same area. Inhabitants of these sites utilized earthen bowls and painted grey pottery, marking the transition to iron tools and weapons.

- **Expansion and Consolidation of Aryans:** The later Vedic texts depict the Aryan expansion from Punjab across the **Ganga-Yamuna doab**. The Bharatas and Purus, major tribes, united to form the Kuru people.
  - Initially settling between the **Sarasvati and Drishadvati rivers,** the Kurus gradually occupied **Delhi** and the upper doab, known as **Kurukshetra**. Coalescing with the Panchalas in the middle doab, the **Kuru-Panchala** people established their capital at **Hastinapur** in the district of **Meerut**.
  - In this process of expansion, the **'Janas' (Units of tribal people)** of the early Vedic age were transformed into **'Janapadas' (territory under units of tribal people)** of the later Vedic age.
  - The Aryans in the later Vedic age also acquired knowledge of the eastern sea and the western sea. They also knew the Narmada river and the Vindhyan mountains.

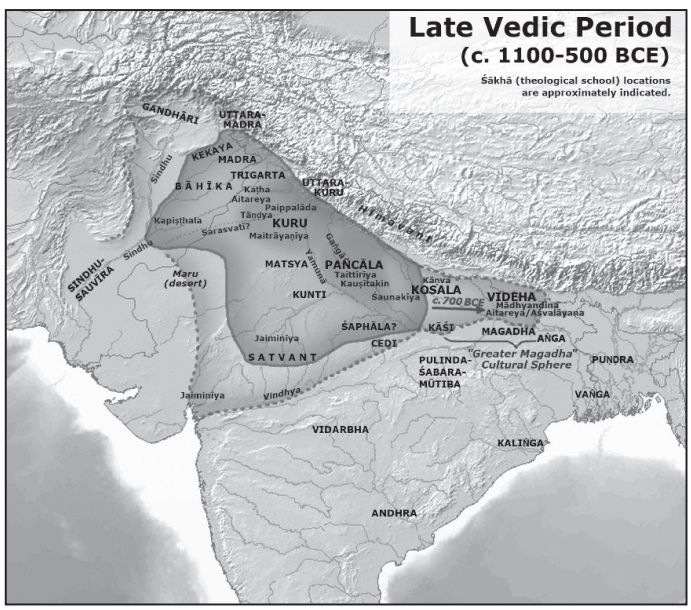


Fig. 3.2: Geographical Extent

- **Kuru-Panchala Authority and the Mahabharata:** The **Kuru-Panchala** people, with their capital at **Hastinapur**, played a crucial role in the **Mahabharata**, a great epic that narrates the **Bharata War** around 950 B.C. This war resulted in the near-annihilation of the Kuru clan.
  - Excavations at Hastinapur reveal settlements datable to 900-500 B.C., but these do not precisely match the epic's description due to later compilation in the 4th century A.D.
- **Vedic Expansion into Kosala and Videha (600 B.C.):** Towards the end of the later Vedic period (around 600 B.C.), Vedic people expanded further eastward into **Kosala** in eastern Uttar Pradesh and **Videha** in **north Bihar**.
  - Despite the association of Kosala with the story of Rama, Vedic literature does not mention him. The Vedic people encountered opposition in the form of others using copper implements and distinctive pottery in eastern Uttar Pradesh and north Bihar.
  - The successful second phase of Vedic expansion is attributed to their use of iron weapons and horse-drawn chariots.

Political Organisation

In the later Vedic period, a significant transformation occurred in the political organization, marking a shift from the prominence of popular assemblies to an augmentation of royal power. The **vidatha,** once a crucial assembly, vanished, while the **sabha and samiti** retained their roles but underwent a notable transformation. The influence of princes and affluent nobles increased, leading to the exclusion of women from the sabha, which became dominated by nobles and Brahmanas.

- **Territorialization of Tribal Authority:** The formation of larger kingdoms reshaped the landscape of power dynamics. Tribal authority evolved into territorial control, with princes ruling over tribes whose dominant territories extended beyond their own. Larger kingdoms were named after settling tribes.
- **Administration and Economic Governance:** Economic aspects of governance evolved during the later Vedic times, with the introduction of tax collection and tributes. These revenues were likely entrusted to a designated officer known as the **sangrihitri**, also called as King's companion. The epics describe large-scale distributions during significant sacrifices, highlighting the king's benevolence.
  - Administration at the lower level possibly involved village assemblies, controlled by dominant tribe chiefs, responsible for both local case trials and governance.
  - **No Standing Army:** Even in this era, the king did not maintain a standing army; instead, tribal units were mobilized in times of war, emphasizing a communal approach to defence.
- **Geographical and Societal Shifts:** The political context of the later Vedic period witnessed the transition from small

tribal settlements to more robust kingdoms, accompanied by an increase in royal authority. Geographically, the shift from the Rig Vedic core area to the **Kuru–Panchala Region** represented a consolidation of power in the Indo-Gangetic divide and upper Ganga Valley.

- **Rastra:** The term "rastra" gained prominence during this period, reflecting a shift from wars fought over cattle to conflicts for territorial control. The predominantly pastoral society of early Vedic times transformed into an agrarian one, with chiefs benefiting at the expense of tribal peasants. Although traces of elective processes for leaders were evident, hereditary kingship began to take root, solidifying the monarch's role in governance.

❑ **Ritual Reinforcement of Royal Authority:** Ritual enactments played a pivotal role in strengthening the king's influence. The **Rajasuya**, symbolizing royal consecration, bestowed supreme power upon the king. The Ashvamedha, or horse sacrifice, was a prominent and elaborate ritual performed .It was a significant religious ceremony described in the Vedic texts, particularly the **"Yajurveda" and the "Shatapatha Brahmana."**

As the period progressed, the political landscape shifted towards **'janapadas'** instead of 'janas,' emphasizing territorial entities over tribes. The king, typically a Kshatriya, saw the emergence of hereditary kingship, and diverse regional titles were attributed to the monarch across different territories.

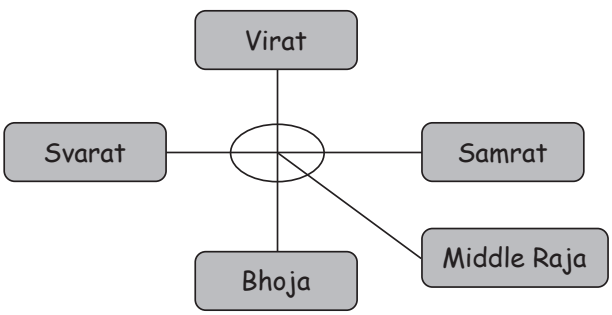


Fig. 3.3: Different titles of king

Social Organisation

In the later Vedic period, the social system changed. The changes and arrival of some new attributes are studied as:

❑ **Varna System and Social Stratification:** In the later Vedic period, a distinct social order known as the varna system emerged, dividing society into four varnas: **Brahmanas, Rajanyas or Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras.** This system marked a departure from the Rig Vedic society. The Brahmanas, initially one of sixteen priestly classes, gained prominence through the growing cult of sacrifices.

- **Dvijas:** The upper three varnas, referred to as Dvija or "twice born," discriminated against Shudras and Chandals. The Varna system became a defining feature of the Varna-ashrama-dharma society.

❑ **Social Hierarchy and Exogamy Practices:** A rigid social hierarchy developed, restricting social mobility. Caste exogamy was extensively practised, prohibiting marriages between individuals of the same gotra or common ancestor.

- **Discrimination:** This contributed to the social differentiation within the society. The rise of social hierarchy was accompanied by discriminatory practices, where the upper three classes discriminated against **Shudras and Chandals.**

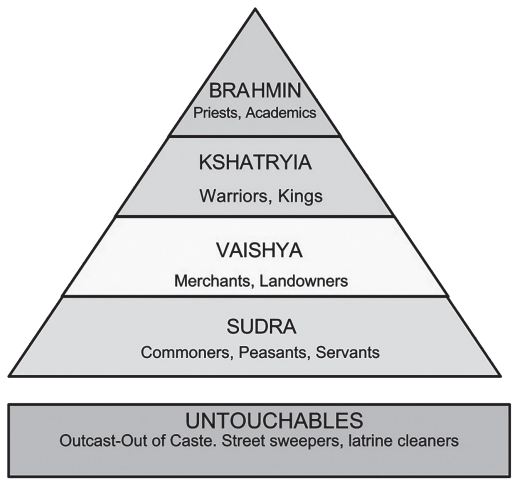


Fig. 3.4: Caste Hierarchy

❑ **Influence of Sacrifices on Brahmanas:** The later Vedic society witnessed a significant increase in the power of the Brahmanas, particularly due to the burgeoning cult of sacrifices. The Brahmanas conducted rituals and sacrifices for both their clients and themselves, as well as officiating at festivals associated with agricultural operations.

- The relationship between brahmanas and rajanyas (warrior-nobles) occasionally led to conflicts, especially when dealing with positions of supremacy. Despite occasional conflicts, cooperation between the higher varnas, including vaisyas, became crucial in ruling over the rest of society.

❑ **Family Structure and Patriarchal Authority:** The family structure in later Vedic times changed, evolving into joint families with three or four generations living together. A patrimonial system developed, giving increasing authority to the father, who even had the power to disinherit his son.

- Princely families witnessed the strengthening of the **right of primogeniture** (the right of succession belonging to the firstborn child). Women, although some participated in philosophical discussions and coronation rituals, generally experienced a lower social status, confined to household chores and subordinate positions.

❑ **Gotra System and Marriage Practices:** The institution of **gotra** became prominent during the later Vedic period, initially signifying a cow pen but later representing descent from a common ancestor.

- **Gotra exogamy** was practised, forbidding marriages between individuals of the same gotra. Legendary seers like Kashyapa and Vashista were associated with the naming of gotras.
- The later Vedic culture also mentions the **Chandrayana Penance** for those violating the gotra restrictions in marriage.

The later Vedic period was marked by the consolidation of the varna system, social hierarchy, family structures, and the emergence of ritualistic practices that significantly shaped the dynamics of ancient Indian society.

Religion

During the later Vedic period, the upper doab emerged as the cradle of Aryan culture, strongly influenced by Brahmanical traditions. The entire Vedic literature was compiled in the **Kuru-Panchala** region, with the cult of sacrifice serving as the cornerstone of this culture. While the Rig Vedic gods Indra and **Agni** diminished in significance, **Prajapati,** the creator, rose to supreme status. Additional minor gods like **Rudra** and **Vishnu** gained prominence in response to the changing socio-cultural landscape.

- **Transformation in Worship Practices:** In this period, worship underwent significant changes. While prayers persisted, sacrifices became the dominant mode of placating the gods, assuming both public and domestic dimensions.
  - Public sacrifices involved the entire community, often synonymous with the tribe, while individuals conducted private sacrifices in their settled households.
  - Sacrifices, marked by the killing of animals and the destruction of cattle wealth, played a pivotal role in religious practices.
- **Social Division and Deities:** As society became stratified into classes like Brahmanas, Rajanyas, Vasyas, and Shudras, each social order began to adopt its own deities. **Pushan**, originally associated with cattle care, came to be regarded as the **god of the Shudras**.
  - Symbolic objects started being worshipped, and signs of **idolatry** emerged in later Vedic times, reflecting the diversification of religious practices in response to social divisions.
- **Rise of Brahmanical Influence:** The Brahmanas, **one of the sixteen types of priests,** played a crucial role in shaping religious practices. They claimed a **monopoly** on priestly knowledge and expertise, inventing and elaborating rituals that were sometimes adopted by non-Aryans.
  - Rituals were accompanied by formulae carefully pronounced by the sacrificer **(yajamana)**. Priests were generously rewarded, receiving gifts and, in some instances, portions of territory as **Dakshina**.
- **Reaction against Priestly Domination:** Towards the end of the Vedic period, especially in the regions of **Panchala and Videha around 600 B.C.**, a strong reaction emerged against priestly dominance, cults, and rituals.
  - The compilation of the **Upanishads** marked a philosophical shift, criticizing rituals and emphasizing the importance of right belief and knowledge. The Upanishads stressed understanding the self **(atma)** and its relation to **Brahma**, challenging the priest-dominated religious practices.
- **Material and Territorial Changes:** Material changes, such as the transition from pastoralism to agriculture and the emergence of territorial kingdoms, influenced religious attitudes. Wars were no longer solely fought for cattle but also for territory.
  - The frequency and elaborateness of yajnas increased, involving the killing of animals and the destruction of cattle wealth.
  - **Purpose of Yajnas:** The yajnas served the dual purpose of establishing the authority of chiefs and reinforcing the territorial aspect of the polity.
- **Shifting Deity Importance:** With changes in material life, the **importance of Rig Vedic gods Indra and Agni waned,** making way for **Prajapati** as the supreme deity.
  - Other minor gods like **Vishnu and Rudra gained significance.** Idolatry surfaced in the later Vedic phase, mirroring the societal divisions, as various social orders began adopting their own deities.

The later Vedic period witnessed dynamic changes in religious practices, reflecting shifts in societal structures, economic activities, and philosophical ideologies, culminating in a significant reaction against the dominance of priestly rituals and the emergence of philosophical thought.

Economy

The Later Vedic period, also known as the **PGW–Iron Phase culture**, witnessed significant transformations in economic practices. A crucial factor in the expansion of Aryan culture during this time was the introduction of iron, marked around 1000 B.C., referred to as **Krishna Ayas/Shyama Ayas**. This period, largely rural, laid the groundwork for both agricultural and urban developments.

- **Adoption and Spread of Iron Technology:** The utilization of iron began in the Gandhara area of Pakistan around 1000 B.C., with its presence extending to regions like

Baluchistan, eastern Punjab, western Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan. Iron implements, including weapons, became commonplace in western Uttar Pradesh from approximately 800 B.C. This technological advancement likely played a role in the Vedic people's ability to overcome adversaries and clear forests.

- **Agricultural Practices and Livelihood:** Although few iron agricultural tools have been found, agriculture was the primary livelihood during the Later Vedic period. Texts describe ploughing rituals, emphasizing the prevalence of agriculture even as late Vedic people faced challenges such as cattle slaughter.
  - **Barley, rice, and wheat became staple crops,** with rice making its debut in the doab. The later Vedic people led settled lives, utilizing diverse arts and crafts.
- **Rise of Specialized Crafts:** Craftsmanship flourished during this period, with mentions of **smiths, smelters, jewellers, and** weavers. Excavations reveal various pottery types, such as black-and-red ware and the distinctive Painted Grey Ware.
  - **Glass hoards and bangles** found in PGW layers suggest the use of prestige objects. Specialized crafts contributed to the material advancement of the Vedic people.

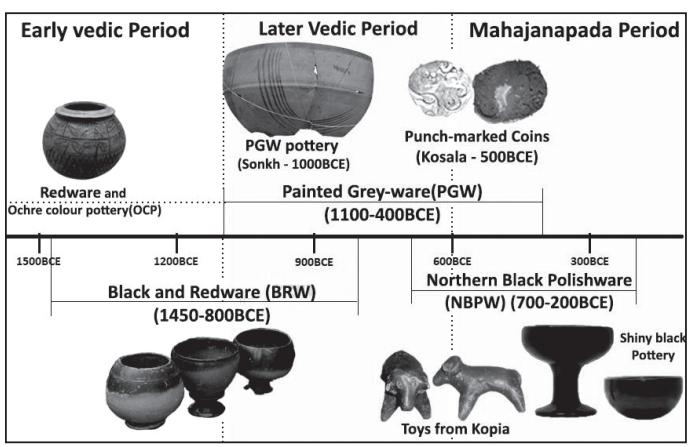


Fig. 3.5: Timeline of Pottery

- **Settlements and Urbanism:** Excavations indicate settlements across the upper Gangetic basin, mainly in western Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, and Rajasthan. These settlements, lasting from one to three centuries, primarily consisted of mudbrick or wattle-and-daub houses.
  - Toward the end of the Later Vedic period, faint beginnings of towns like **Hastinapur** and **Kausambi** emerged, marking the transition to urbanism.
- **Economic Exchange and Trade:** The Later Vedic people engaged in commerce, with mentions of seas and sea voyages in Vedic texts. Merchants organized into **guilds or shresthins,** suggesting a rudimentary economic structure. The exchange occurred through barter, with the unit of value being the **Niskha**. Wagons drawn by oxen served as a primary mode of transport.

PGW: Conventionally dated between 1200 and 600–500 BCE, or between 1300 and 500–300 BCE, the Painted Grey Ware culture (PGW) is an Iron Age Indo-Aryan culture of the western Gangetic plain and the Ghaggar–Hakra valley in the Indian subcontinent. It is the modern equivalent of the **Black and Red Ware (BRW)** culture that is still prevalent in Central India and the eastern Gangetic plain. It is the successor to the Cemetery Harappan culture and the BRW culture within this region.

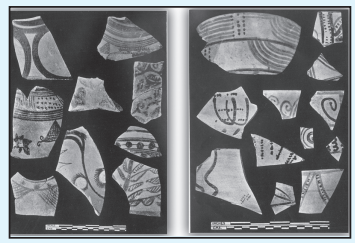


Fig. 3.6: PGW Pottery

BRW: The **Black and Red Ware (BRW)** culture, associated with the Neolithic, Harappa, Bronze Age, Iron Age, megalithic, and early historical periods, thrived in the Western Ganges plain (western Uttar Pradesh) from approximately 1450 to 1200 BCE.

Fig. 3.7: BRW Pottery

It succeeded the **Ochre Coloured Pottery** culture and preceded the Painted Greyware culture. In this region, the BRW sites revealed subsistence agriculture practices, focusing on the cultivation of **rice, barley, and legumes**. The pottery exhibited distinctive black and red colouring with white linear designs. Additionally, artefacts, including ornaments crafted from **shell, copper, carnelian, and terracotta**, were unearthed at these sites.

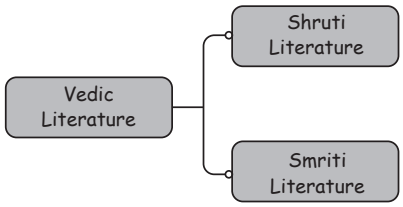
- **Taxation and Tribute:** In the Later Vedic age, the collection of taxes and tributes became mandatory, administered by **Sangrihitri**. **Vaishyas** emerged as the sole tribute payers during this period, indicating a structured economic system.

The Later Vedic period marked a notable advancement in material life, transitioning from pastoral and semi-nomadic lifestyles to settled agricultural practices. The widespread use of iron, the rise of specialized crafts, and the emergence of towns reflected the economic prosperity of the Vedic people during this phase. The integration of diverse economic activities laid the foundation for the subsequent developments in ancient Indian history.

VEDIC LITERATURE

Vedic literature is a vast collection of special writings, songs, and thoughtful writings created over many years during the early and later times of ancient India. These special writings, mostly in Sanskrit, show us a big picture of how people in ancient India thought about religion, philosophy, and

culture. It's like a beautiful tapestry that includes magical songs from the Rig Veda to deep thoughts in the Upanishads. In these writings, you'll find a mix of rituals, thinking about the universe, and exploring big questions about life.



The **Rig Veda has enchanting songs,** and the Upanishads have wise thoughts. Together, they create a rich repository that tells us about the way people lived, what they believed, and the deep questions they asked. Vedic literature is like a window into ancient India's heart and mind, showing us a colourful blend of rituals, cosmic wonders, and profound ideas that have left a lasting mark on the spiritual traditions of India.

Types of Vedic Literature

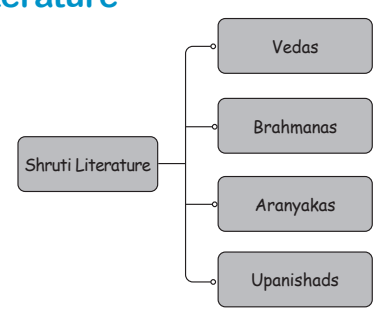
There are broadly two types of Vedic literature:

- **Shruti Literature,** derived from the term **'Shruti,'** which means **'to hear,'** encompasses sacred texts like **Vedas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas, and Upanishads.** These texts are considered canonical, representing divine revelation and absolute truth, believed to be eternal and beyond questioning.
- On the other hand, **Smriti Literature,** stemming from the word **'Smriti,'** meaning **'to be remembered,'** serves as a supplementary body of knowledge that can evolve over time. It constitutes the entirety of post-Vedic Classical Sanskrit literature and includes Vedanga, Shad darsana, Puranas, Itihasa, Upveda, Tantras, Agamas, and Upangas. Unlike Shruti, Smriti literature is not considered unquestionable truth and may undergo modifications or updates.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

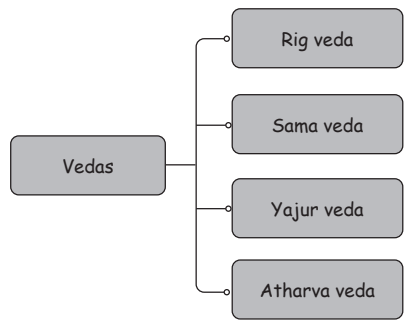
How has the recognition of Vedic chanting as part of UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage impacted the preservation and global recognition of this tradition rooted in the recitation of ancient hymns from the Vedas within Hinduism's oldest scriptures?

Shruti Literature



Vedas:

- The Vedas are extensive collections of religious writing that date back to ancient India and are written in **Vedic Sanskrit**. They comprise the oldest corpus of Sanskrit literature as well as the oldest Hindu scriptures. It is believed that the Vedas were verbally transmitted from one generation to the next.
- As a result, Shruti is another name for them. The Rig Veda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda, and Atharva Veda are the four Vedas that make up the Vedic literature. Each Vedic mantra text is referred to as a **Samhita.**



- **Rig Veda:** The Rig Veda, consisting of **1,028 hymns divided into 10 Mandals (books),** serves as an invaluable source depicting the lives of early Vedic people in India. Recognizing its cultural significance, **UNESCO** has included the Rig Veda in the list of literature representing **World Human Heritage.**
  - The initial Mandals, II to VII, are known as family books, attributed to specific seers or rishis. Mandal VIII predominantly relates to **Kanva's** family, while **Mandal IX** compiles **Soma hymns**. **Mandal I** and **X,** considered later additions, include the **Purusashukta** explaining the four varnas.
  - The priests associated with the Rig Veda are **Kotri** or **Motri,** and its Upveda is the Ayurveda. The **Shakala Shakha** is the sole surviving recension of the Rig Veda.
- **Sama Veda:** The Sama Veda comprises verses primarily derived from the Rig Veda, arranged in a poetic form for singing. This collection includes **1,810 melodies** and features the **Dhrupada** raga. Noteworthy recensions **(Shakhas)** of the **Sama Veda** are **Kauthuma, Jaiminiya (Talavakara)**, and Ranayaniya.
- **Yajur Veda:** The Yajur Veda focuses on the procedural aspects of sacrificial rituals. It is divided into the **Shukla Yajur Veda** (or White Yajur Veda, containing only mantras) and the **Krishna Yajur Veda** (or **Black Yajur Veda**, including both mantras and prose explanations). The Upveda of the Yajur Veda is the Dhanur Veda.
- **Atharva Veda:** The Atharva Veda, the final Veda, contains magic spells and charms aimed at warding off evil spirits and diseases. This non-Aryan work is divided into 20 kandas with **711 hymns** and includes the **Gopatha Brahmana**. The **Shaunaka** and **Paippalada** are the recensions of the **Atharva Veda**, and its **Upveda** is the Shilpa Veda.

Brahmanas:

Brahmanas, associated with each Veda, delineate the guidelines for performing sacrificial ceremonies and interpret Vedic hymns in a traditional manner. The Satpatha Brahmana, linked to the Yajur Veda, stands out as the most comprehensive, recommending 'one hundred sacred paths.'

Aranyakas:

Aranyakas, often termed **'forest books,'** are composed by hermits residing in jungles for their disciples. These texts delve into mysticism and philosophy, opposing the emphasis on sacrifice in Brahmanas. Aranyakas are considered the concluding segment of the Brahmanas, interpreting rituals in a more philosophical light.

Upanishads:

Upanishads, derived from the literal meaning **'to sit near someone,'** comprise 108 texts, with 13 being particularly prominent. These profound writings explore concepts such as 'Atman' and 'Brahman,' delving into the philosophy of life, the universe, self, body, and sacrifice.

- ❑ Upanishads stress the acquisition of knowledge about the self **(Atman)** and the proper understanding of its relationship with Brahman.
- ❑ The Upanishads are critical of the ritualistic interpretation of the Vedas and give a spiritual interpretation of the Vedas and stress on **'Jnanamarga** (path of knowledge) to attain salvation.
- ❑ The **idea of rebirth** first appears in the **Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.** The concept of **'Unity in diversity'** is drawn from the **Mundaka Upanishad.**
- ❑ The **Manduk upanishad**, exemplified by the phrase **"Satyamev jayate,"** holds the distinction of being the largest Upanishad.
- ❑ The **Chhandogya Upanishad** extensively discusses the first three ashrams and delineates two main types of marriages: Anuloma, where a man marries within or below his varna, and Pratiloma, a rarer form involving a girl marrying below her own varna, not sanctioned by the Vedas.

Smriti Literature

This constitutes the entirety of post-Vedic Classical Sanskrit literature and includes Vedanga, Shad Darsana, Puranas, Itihasa, Upveda, etc. Some are:

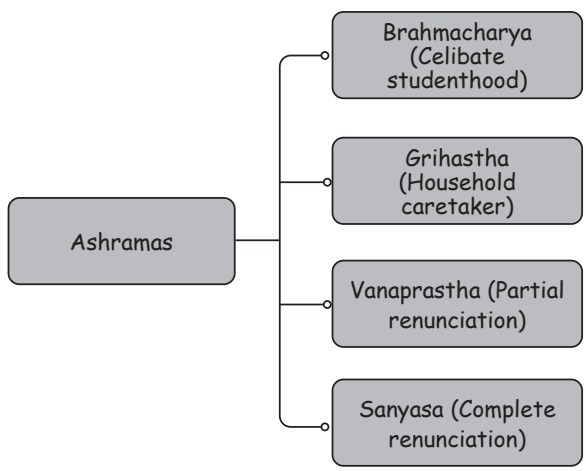
- ❑ **Vedanta:** Vedanta, literally translating to the 'conclusion of the Vedas,' marks the culmination of Vedic teachings, unveiling the ultimate purpose of the Vedas. This philosophical tradition critiques rituals and ceremonies, symbolizing the concluding phase of Vedic development. Vedanga, meaning the 'auxiliary limbs of the Vedas,' consists of supplementary texts facilitating the accurate recitation and comprehension of the Vedas. While not classified as Shruti, these texts are believed to have human origins, not divinely revealed, and are presented in the form of concise Sutras. These Sutras, comprising six branches—Phonetics, Ritualistic science, Astronomy, Grammar, Etymology, and Metrics—serve as succinct statements conveying diverse ideas. These are:
  - **Shiksha:** Shiksha, often likened to the nose of the Vedic body, provides instructions through recitation, focusing on the correct pronunciation and accent of the Samhita texts. It emphasizes phonetics, determining sound changes during recitation and aiming for syllable, tone, pitch, and durational purity, along with the force of articulation, evenness, and continuity.
  - **Kalpa:** Representing the arm of the Vedas, Kalpa outlines rules for the proper execution of rituals in ceremonies like weddings and naming functions. Derived from the Brahmana texts, Kalpa sutras, written in sutra style, are divided into **Srautasutras** for sacrifices, **Smarthasutras** further categorized into **Grihyasutras** for domestic rites, and Dharmasutras providing rules for behaviour and the four stages of life.

The Kalpasutra is further divided into:

- ❑ **Shrautasutra:** concerned with Vedic sacrifices that require three or more fires.
- ❑ **Grihyasutra:** concerned with comparatively simpler domestic sacrifices, which require only one fire. It includes rituals pertaining to crucial life stages (Samskaras) such as Upanayana (initiation), Vivaha (marriage), and Antyeshti (funerary practices).
- ❑ **Dharmasutra:** concerned with the rituals' Dharma

  - **Vyakarna:** Vyakarana, considered the mouth of the Vedas, serves as the grammar for Vedic language, essential for sentence, phrase, and word formation. Authored by scholars Panini and Yaska, it comprises 4000 sutras in four divisions dealing with phonetics, sentence structure, root words, and groups of nouns and phrases.
  - **Nirukta:** Functioning as the ear of the Veda Purusha, **Nirukta**, or etymology, explains the choice and meaning of words in context. Serving as a dictionary, it interprets obscure words, providing insights into the concealed meaning and linguistic significance of Vedic texts.
  - **Chhanda:** Regarded as the feet of the **Veda Purusha,** Chhanda deals with the metrics of Vedic hymns, specifying syllabic counts for different meters like **Gayatri** (8 syllables), **Trishtup** (11 syllables), and **Jagati** (12 syllables).
  - **Jyotisha:** Representing the eyes of the Vedas, Jyotisha, or astronomy/astrology, imparts knowledge about auspicious dates and times for ceremonies, determined by the positions of celestial bodies. The success of rituals is believed to depend on specific planetary influences, calculated using mathematical principles.

- **Puranas:** The literal meaning of the word **"puranas" is "old."** They were later religious sectarian literature, written in the fourth and sixth centuries, but they have a clear understanding of earlier customs. They illuminate the origins and progression of Hindu religious practices while also reflecting the social and religious ideals of the Brahmanical tradition.
  - Traditionally, it is believed that **Vyasa** composed the Puranas, and there is a widespread acceptance of the concept that a **mahayuga** comprises **four yugas**. The larger cosmic cycles involve **1000 mahayugas** forming a **kalpa**, with each kalpa further divided into **14 manvantaras**, each presided over by a specific **Manu**. In a cyclic process, each **Yuga** undergoes periodic destruction, leading to the world's recreation, intertwined with the cyclical rise and fall of Dharma.
  - The Puranas, are classified into **18 Mahapuranas** (such as **Brahma, Vishnu, Narada, Bhagavata, Padma, Garuda, Varaha, Matsya, Kurma, Linga, Shiva, Skanda, Agni, Vamana,** etc.) and numerous **Upapuranas** (secondary Puranas), offer a diverse wealth of narratives.
    - Certain Puranas, like Brahma, Matsya, Harivamsha, Vishnu, Brahmanda, and Vayu, go beyond religious themes to provide valuable insights into historical dynasties from Haryankas, Shishunagas, Nandas, Mauryas, Shungas, up to the Guptas.
  - Additionally, these texts furnish detailed accounts of historical geography, encompassing information about mountains, rivers, and more. The Puranas generally discuss five topics in the time span of four **ages/yugas (Satya, Treta, Dvapara, and Kali):**
    - **Sarga** (Deals with the creation of the world)
    - **Pratisarga** (Recreation)
    - **Manvantaras** (Periods of the various Manus)
    - **Vamsha** (Genealogies of the gods and rishis)
    - **Vamshanucharita** (Texts relating to royal dynasties, both the **Suryavanshis:** who claimed their descent from the Sun **Chandravanshis:** who claimed their descent from the Moon,
- **Dharmashastra:** Dharmashastra comprises **Sanskrit texts** that specifically address Dharma, embodying a moral code aligned with universal natural law. Dharma encompasses the pursuit of life goals known as **Purusharthas,** including righteous conduct **(Dharma),** material well-being **(Artha),** sensual pleasure **(Kama),** and liberation from the cycle of life and death **(Moksha).**
  - These texts, categorized into **Dharmasutras** (dating from approximately 600 to 300 BCE) and Smritis (written between approximately 200 BCE and 900 CE), acknowledge three sources of Dharma: the Vedas **(Shruti),** remembered texts **(Smriti),** and the good practices of cultured individuals **(Shistachara)**.
  - An individual's Dharma is influenced by factors such as gender, marital status, varna, and ashram.
  - Among the four varnas, Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, and Vaishyas are considered Dvija (twice-born), having undergone the sacred thread ceremony, while Shudras face various civil disabilities. The four ashrams dividing the life of a Dvija male were:
    - **Brahmacharya** marks the initial phase of a man's life, involving residing with a guru and acquiring an education.
    - **Grihastha** signifies the second life stage, where a man enters matrimony and assumes the role of a householder, leading a family-centred life.
    - **Vanaprastha** represents the third stage, wherein a man relinquishes worldly affairs and retreats to the forest for meditation.
    - **Sannyasa**, the concluding stage, denotes the renunciation of all worldly connections, leading to asceticism and the dedication to propagate the principles of religion and truth.



- **Epics:** The Sanskrit epics, Mahabharata and Ramayana, integral to both oral and written traditional history, share a connection with the Puranas. Heroes and clans in these epics trace their lineage to Manu's progeny. The Mahabharata contains a section called **Ramopakhyana**, narrating Rama's story, while the Ramayana mentions the **Kurus and Hastinapur** but doesn't include the Mahabharata war.
  - **Ramayana:** The Ramayana narrates the tale of Rama's journey, symbolizing the triumph of virtue over vice as Rama is the epitome of an ideal man in Hindu culture.
  - **Mahabharata:** The Mahabharata unfolds as a narrative of the rivalry between two groups of brothers in the Hastinapura Kingdom, culminating in an epic battle.

Mahabharata	Ramayana
❑ Roughly composed between c. 400 BCE–400 CE. ❑ The Mahabharata is said to have been composed by Ved Vyasa and consists of 18 Parvas (books) and has around 1 lakh verses. It is considerably longer than the Ramayana.	❑ Roughly composed between c. 400 BCE–300 CE. ❑ Ramayana is considered the **Adi-Kavya** (first conscious poetry) composed by **Valmiki** and it consists of seven Kandas (books) having around 24,000 verses. It is much shorter than the Mahabharata, despite later additions.
❑ Traditionally, the war is believed to have happened in the Dvapara yuga. But, historians consider the events and social character of the Mahabharata to correspond to an earlier stage of development than the Ramayana, as the Mahabharata's setting pertains to the **Indo-Gangetic divide** and the upper Ganga valley.	❑ Traditionally, it is considered that Rama lived in the Treta yuga, i.e., earlier than the Mahabharata. But, since the setting of the Ramayana shifted eastwards to the **middle Ganga Valley**, the language of the Ramayana is more polished and its concepts more closely related to later societies, historians consider it to be at a later stage than the Mahabharata.

CONCLUSION

The Vedic Age, a crucial era in ancient Indian history, marked a significant cultural, social, political, economic, and religious evolution. The Rig Vedic period introduced pastoral and nomadic lifestyles, celebrating cosmic forces and nature. The Later Vedic period solidified varna and ashrama systems, witnessed territorial kingdoms' rise, and emphasized sacrificial rituals. This period embraced iron technology, agricultural progress, and the emergence of urban centers. Socially, varna distinctions formed, altering family structures, and religious beliefs. Economic shifts saw a transition from nomadic to settled agricultural communities, with urban centres like Hastinapur emerging. The Vedic Age, characterized by traditions and transformations, set the stage for subsequent periods in ancient India's historical narrative.

Mahajanapadas (c. 600 BCE - 300 BCE)

4

From the sixth century BC, the Indian Subcontinent experienced a transformative era, marked by the **'Second Urbanisation'** and the rise of large territorial states in eastern UP and western Bihar, shifting the focus from the North-West regions like Punjab and Haryana.

This shift was primarily due to the increased use of iron for weapons and agricultural tools, such as the ploughshare, which revolutionized both warfare and agriculture. Iron weapons elevated the significance of the warrior class, while new agricultural implements allowed for the clearance of thick forests and the cultivation of hard soils, leading to surplus food grain production. This surplus not only supported the needs of emerging towns but also fuelled the military and administrative demands of princes and from now onwards history of ancient India moved from a tribal state of life to an organised form of state, called as Janapads.

SOURCES OF HISTORY OF THIS PHASE

Brahminical Literature

- It consisted of the 'Vedangas' or the limbs of the Vedas whose study was necessary to understand the Vedas properly. The Vedangas were written in the form of 'Sutras' ie, a condensed prose style intended for memorization. There are six vedangas:
  (a) Shiksha (Phonetics),
  (b) Kalpa (rituals),
  (c) Vyakarana (grammar),
  (d) Nirukta (etymology),
  (e) Chandas (metrics)
  (f) Jyotisha (astronomy, not astrology).
- The Vedangas in contrast to the Vedic literature are called 'Smriti' or literature handed down by tradition because they are of human origin.
- The Kalpa sutras are divided into three classes:
  - **Srautasutras** are concerned with rituals of great scarifies of Agni, soma, and animals. The sulvasutras, which are the oldest books on Indian geometry are part of the Srautasutras.
  - **Grihyasutras** are concerned with the domestic ceremonies and sacrifices to be performed by the householder.
  - **Dharmasutras** are concerned with the legal aspects of life and are the foundation for the Dharmasastras such as the laws of Manu.
- Four minor Vedas called **'Upavedas'** came to be written based on the Vedic literature. They are:
  - Ayurveda is concerned with medicine
  - Silpa is concerned with sculpture
  - Gandharva Veda - concerned with music
  - Dhanur Veda - concerned with warfare
- **Sanskrit Epics:** The Ramayana and The Mahabharata. These epics are traditionally ascribed to authors (Valmiki for Ramayana and Vyasa for Mahabharata) but are likely the work of many authors over time.

Panini and his Astadhyayi

- **Era:** Lived in the 5th or 4th century BCE. A Brahmana from Shalatura in Gandhara (north-west region).
- **Ashtadhyayi:** A Landmark in Sanskrit Grammar
- **Composition:** Contains 3,996 aphorisms (sutras) encapsulating Sanskrit grammar rules.
- **Characteristics:** Known for its brevity, clarity, and comprehensive coverage.
- **Impact:** Marked the transition from Vedic Sanskrit to classical Sanskrit.
- **Legacy:** Astadhyayi became a foundational text in the field of Sanskrit grammar, surpassing earlier grammarians.
- **Influence and Acknowledgement**
  - **Successors:** Influenced subsequent grammarians like Katyayana (4th century BCE) and Patanjali (2nd century BCE).
  - **Historical Record:** Mentioned by the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang in the 7th century CE.
  - **Archaeological Identification:** Ancient Shalatura was possibly identified with Lahur near the Kabul and Indus rivers confluence.
- **Traditional and Legendary Accounts**
  - **Court Association:** Allegedly associated with the Nanda king's court at Pataliputra.
  - **Examination Board:** Mentioned by 10th-century writer Rajashekhara in connection with a board of examiners at Pataliputra.
- **Ashtadhyayi as a Historical Source**
  - **Content:** Besides grammar, it incidentally refers to contemporary places, people, customs, institutions, coins, weights, measures, and beliefs.
  - **Historical Significance:** Used by historians to glean information about the 5th/4th century BCE society and culture.

Buddhist Literature

It consists of the Pali canon in the form of three pitakas: Vinayapitaka, Abhidhammapitaka and Suttapitaka.

- **Suttapitaka:** It consists of the speeches and messages of the Buddha. It was composed by Ananda in the first Buddhist council at Rajagriha in 483 BC. The first four books of the Sutta Pitaka are **Digha, Majjhima, Samyutta, and Anguttara Nikayas**.
- **Vinayapitaka:** It consists of the monastic code with rules of behaviour for the monks and nuns of the Sangha. It was composed by Upali in the Ist Buddhist council at Rajagrihą in 483 BC.
- **Abhidhammapitaka:** It is a compilation of philosophical sayings. It was composed by Mogaliputta Tissa (Upagupta) in the 3rd Buddhist council at Pataliputra in 250 BC.
- **Jatakas:** Part of the Khuddaka Nikaya in the Buddhist tradition, these are not attributed to a single writer but are a collection of stories.

Jain Literature

- It was written in **Prakrit**. Earlier Jain literature was a set of 14 books called **Purvas**. They are now lost. 12 Angas were written, based on 14 Purvas.
- Other works of this period was the Bhagavati Sutra and the Parishishtaparvan.

Foreign Authors

- Herodotus wrote **'Historica'**. It talks about the trade relations of India with Persia.
- Aristobolus wrote **'History of the war'**. He came to India along with Alexander.
- Accounts of Alexander's military career by writers such as Arrian, Curtius Rufus, Diodorus Sicilus, Plutarch, Justin.

16 MAHAJANPADAS

- The majority of the Mahajanapadas were located north of the Vindhyas, spanning from Bihar in the east to the northwestern frontier of the subcontinent. From approximately 600 BCE onwards, the political history of India can be characterised as a series of conflicts and power struggles among many states vying for dominance. According to Buddhist literature, the **Anguttara Nikaya** region, situated between the Himalayas and the Narmada River, was geographically delineated into sixteen distinct and autonomous realms known as Mahajanapadas. These regions were:

Kashi

- **Geographical Location:** Bounded by the Varuna and Asi rivers.
- **Capital:** Varanasi (modern Benaras) situated on the banks of the Ganga.
- **Key Aspects:** It aspired for political paramountcy and therefore was engaged in long-standing rivalries, especially with Kosala. It also faced conflicts with Anga and Magadha. However, later Kashi was ultimately absorbed into the Kosalan kingdom.

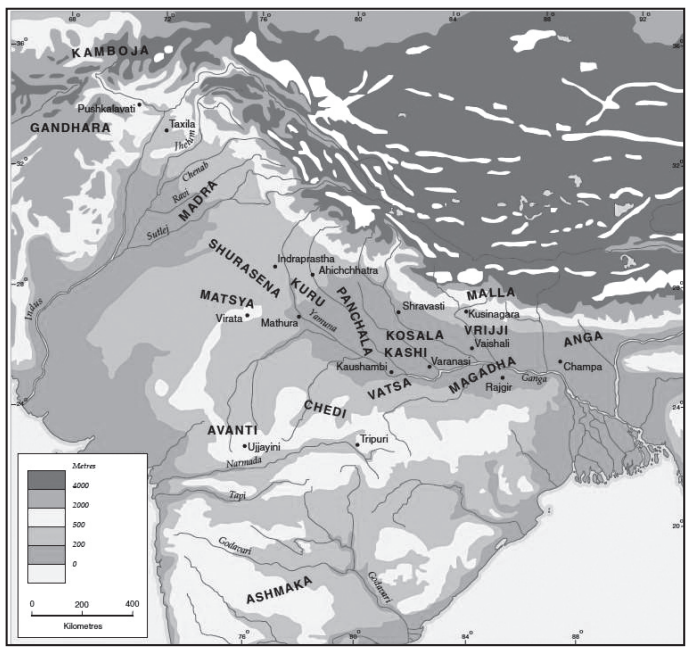


Fig. 4.1: 16 Mahajanapadas

Kosala

- **Geographical Location:** Bounded by the **Sadanira (Gandak)** on the east, the Gomati on the west, the Sarpika or **Syandika (Sai)** to the south, and the Nepal hills to the north.
- **Capital:** Its capital was divided between **Shravasti** (north capital) and **Kushavati** (south capital), with Saketa and Ayodhya as significant towns. It also included the republican territory of Shakyas of Kapilavastu
- **Key Aspects:** Kosala was known for its military might, They conquered Kashi and extended their influence over various regions. It was contemporaneous with the Buddha, as its king, **Pasenadi (Prasenajit),** is often mentioned in Pali texts. Kosala's history is marked by matrimonial ties and subsequent conflicts with Magadha. Lumbini, located in the Kapilavastu is the birthplace of Buddha.

Anga

- **Geographical Location:** Located in the modern-day Bhagalpur and Monghyr districts of Bihar, it was bordered by the Ganga to the north and the Champa River to the west.
- **Capital: Champa (also known as Malini),** was one of the 6th century BCE's greatest cities.
- **Key Aspects:** Its location at the confluence of two rivers made it a crucial commercial hub with extensive trade routes. Merchants of Anga sailed to overseas regions like Suvarnabhumi (Southeast Asia).

Magadha

- **Geographical Location:** It covers the Patna and Gaya districts of Bihar. Its boundaries were marked by the Ganga, Son, and Champa rivers, and the southern Vindhyan ranges.
- **Capital:** Girivraja or Rajagriha, near modern Rajgir.
- **Key Aspects:** Puranas mention a succession of Magadha kings, starting from Brihadratha, leading to the rise of the Haryanka dynasty after the 6th century BCE.

Vajji (Vrijji)

- **Geographical Location:** Situated in eastern India on the north of the Ganga river (in the division of Tirhut) and extended to the Nepal hills.
- **Capital:** Vaishali (Modern Basarh in North Bihar) was an important cultural and political centre.
- **Key Aspect:** The Vajji principality was a confederacy of clans, including the **Vajjis, Lichchhavis (capital-Vaishali), Videhas (capital-Mithila),** and **Nayas/Jnatrikas (Kundapura).** This confederacy was notable for its democratic structure of governance, differing from the monarchical systems prevalent in other regions. Its King Chetaka was the brother of Trishala (the mother of Lord Mahavira) he was also the father of Chellana, who is married to Magadha King Bimbisara. Lord Mahavira was a member of the Jnatrikas Clan. The Vajjis were subjected to defeat and subsequent assimilation into the Magadha empire under the rule of Ajatshatru.

Malla

- **Geographical Location:** The Malla principality lies to the west of Vajji territory.
- **Capital:** It was a confederacy of nine clans with two political centres at Kusinara and Pava.
- **Key Aspects:** Initially a monarchy, Malla had alliances and occasional conflicts with its neighbouring states, including Vajji. Kusinara and Pava are significant Buddhist sites because Buddha ate his last meal and became unwell at Pava before entering Mahaparinirvana at Kusinara.

Chedi

- **Geographical Location:** Located in central India's eastern part of Bundelkhand.
- **Capital:** Sotthivatinagara, identified with the Mahabharata's Shuktimati or Shuktisahvaya.
- **Key Aspect:** Its King was Shishupala. According to the Puranas, Sishupal was an ally of Jarasandha of Magadha and Duryodhana of Kuru. He was a rival of Vasudeva Krishna, his uncle's son. He was killed at the Rajasuya sacrifice of Pandava king Yudhishthira by Vasudeva Krishna.

Vatsa (Vamsa)

- **Geographical Location:** It was located south of the Ganga (on the banks of river Yamuna).
- **Capital:** Kaushambi (at the confluence of the Ganga and Yamuna, near Prayagraj)
- **Key Aspects:** Vatsa was renowned for its fine cotton textiles. Its King Udayana, was the protagonist of three Sanskrit dramas viz. Svapnavasavadatta of Bhasa, Priyadarshika, and Ratnavali of Harsha. Legends describe a rivalry between Udayana and Pradyota of Avanti, as well as a love affair between Udayana and Vasavadatta, Pradyota's daughter.

Kuru

- **Geographical Location:** Located in Western Uttar Pradesh.
- **Capital:** Indapatta (Indraprastha)
- **Key Aspects:** This region saw a transition from a monarchical system to a sangha or oligarchic governance. It is known for establishing matrimonial relations with prominent families like the Yadavas, Bhojas, and Panchalas. The Mahabharata, an epic poem, describes a feud between two Kuru clan branches that were in power.

Panchala

- **Geographical Location:** The region is comprised of areas including the Rohilkhand area and parts of the central Doab region, divided into northern and southern parts by the Ganga.
- **Capital:** Its capitals were Ahichchhatra (north capital) and Kampilya (south capital), with the famous city of Kanyakubja or Kannauj located within its territory.
- **Key Aspects:** The political system in Panchala evolved, shifting from monarchy to oligarchy as suggested by historical texts.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

Can the Mahajanapadas of ancient times be likened to present-day states within a country, or would they be better understood as individual countries within a broader region?

Matsya

- **Geographical Location:** Located in the Jaipur area of Rajasthan, extending into Alwar and Bharatpur.
- **Capital:** Its capital was Viratanagara (Modern Bairata), named after its founder Virata.
- **Key Aspects:** The region is frequently associated with the Shurasenas.

Shurasena

- **Geographical Location:** Located on the banks of river Yamuna.
- **Capital:** Mathura (Madura)

- **Key Aspects:** Its King Avantipura was a disciple of Buddha. The region is also considered a home to Yadu or Yadavas, including the Vrishnis.

Avanti

- **Geographical Location:** Malwa region of Central India
- **Capital:** The Kingdom was divided by Vindhyas ranges with two capitals viz. Ujjain (North Capital) and Mahishmati (South Capital).
- **Key Aspects:** Its King Pradyota was the Father-in-law of Udayana. The region was Involved in conflicts with Vatsa, Magadha, and Kosala.

Gandhara

- **Geographical Location:** Modern Peshawar and Rawalpindi districts of Pakistan and the Kashmir valley.
- **Capital:** Takshashila (Taxila) which was a key centre for trade and learning.
- **Key Aspects:** Its King Pushkarasarin, fought a valiant campaign against Avanti and enjoyed friendly relations with Magadha. Late in the sixth century BCE, the Persians captured Gandhara, according to the Behistun Inscription of the Achaemenid Emperor Darius.
- **Alexander Cunningham's Archaeological Contributions and the Identification of Taxila**
  - **Role and Contribution**
    - **Position:** First Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India in 1871.
    - **Achievement:** Made significant contributions to identifying major cities in ancient India.
  - **Major Archaeological Identifications**
    - **Cities Identified:** Included Aornos, Taxila, Sangala, Srughna, Ahichchhatra, Bairat, Sankisa, Shravasti, Kaushambi, Padmavati, Vaishali, and Nalanda.
    - **Initial Misidentification of Taxila:** Originally identified Taxila (Takshashila) with Manikyala.
    - **Correct Identification of Taxila:** Later confirmed Taxila at Shah-dheri in 1863–64.
  - **Process of Identifying Taxila**
    - **Challenges:** Initial confusion due to erroneous distances recorded by Pliny and lack of information on ruins near Shah-dheri.
    - **Resolution:** Cunningham reconciled discrepancies using distances mentioned in Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang's itineraries.
    - **Findings at Shah-dheri:** Discovered extensive ruins of a fortified city, including stupas, monasteries, and temples.
    - **Distance Analysis:** Adjusted Pliny's recorded distance to match the actual distance between Taxila and other locations.
    - **Supporting Evidence:** Bearings and distances of subsequent locations visited by Hwen Thsang confirmed his identification.
  - **Detailed Description of Taxila's Site**
    - **Areas Described:** Included mounds at Bhir, Hathial, Sirkap, Kacha-kot, Babar Khana, and Sirsukh.
    - **Taxila as an Ancient Capital:** Identified as the ancient capital of Punjab with substantial suburban or outlying remains.

Kamboja

- **Geographical Location:** Included areas of Rajori and Hajra (Kashmir) and North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan
- **Capital:** Pooncha
- **Key Aspects:** The Kambojas gained prominence for their exceptional horse breeds and their skill as horsemen based in the Uttarapatha or North-West region. It was initially a monarchy and later referred to as a sangha in the Arthashastra which was associated with Gandhara.

Assaka (Ashmaka/Ashvaka)

- **Geographical Location:** On the banks of the Godavari River between Godavari and Manjira
- **Capital:** Potana/Podana or Potali (Modern Bodhan, district Nizamabad, and parts of Adilabad in Telangana)
- **Key Aspects:** Located in Dakshinapatha, it was the only Mahajanapada south of the Vindhya Range. At times under the sway of Kashi.

GANA-SANGHAS

The republican tradition in India is as old as age of the Buddha. Though in the pre-Mauryan age monarchies were far stronger and more common, the republics existed either in the Indus basin where they may have been the remnants of the Vedic tribes or in the foothills of the Himalayas in eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar where they were possibly inspired by old ideas of tribal equality which did not give much prominence to single raja.

- The republic unlike the monarchies were ruled by tribal oligarchies where every tribal oligarch was known as raja.
- The rajas in a republic were free to maintain their own little army under his senapti so that each of them could compete with the other. The brahmanas unlike in the monarchies had no place in the early republics.
- In the republics of Shakyas and Lichchhavis the tribal oligarchies which constituted the ruling class belonged to the same clan and the same varna. The administrative machinery of the Shakyas and Lichchhavis was simple. It consisted of Raja, Uparaja (vice-king). Senapati (Commander) and Bhandagarika (treasurer). We hear of as many as seven courts in the hierarchical order for trying the same case.
- The Lichchhavis are said to be the oldest republic in the world. There were said to be 7707 rajas resident

at Vaishali, the capital of the Lichchhavis republic and the Vajji confederacy of which Lichchhavis republic was of member. The administration of the Lichchhavis was much admired by the Buddha. Ajatashatru's war with the Lichchhavis for a period of sixteen years ultimately led to defeat of the Lichchhavis

Key Facts about Gana-Sangha

- **Role in Literature and Texts**
  - **Buddhist and Jaina Sources:** More informative than Brahmanical counterparts about ganas.
  - **Brahmanical Perspective:** Focused on kingship, often equating kinglessness with anarchy.
- **Socio-Political Composition**
  - **Kshatriya Dominance:** Ruled by Kshatriya clans with kinship links.
  - **Other Social Groups:** Non-elite groups like farmers, artisans, and labourers had subordinate roles and lacked political participation rights.
- **Military and Land Ownership**
  - **Army Structure:** Unlike monarchies, ganas may not have had a permanent army. Soldiers likely returned to their lands when not in combat.
  - **Land Ownership:** Dominated by the Kshatriya elite, with possible communal rights over land.
- **Vulnerabilities and Decline**
  - **Internal Dissension:** Prone to internal conflicts, especially against aggressive monarchies.
  - **Defeat by Monarchies:** Eventually subdued by expanding monarchical states, reflecting the limitations of their governance and military systems.

Other notable Sanghas were Sakyas, Koliyas, Bulis, Kalamas, Moriyas, and Bhaggas. The difference between Gana-Sanghas is mentioned below in the table:

Ganga-Sanghas	Kingdoms
The chief post, known as Ganapati or Ganaraja, was not hereditary. An aristocratic council comprised of the leaders of important Kshatriya households held power, and the authority structure of ganas was more tribal.	Kingdoms established a centralised government with the monarch as Sovereign and all authority vested in him and his ruling dynasty. The reigning family established a dynasty based on hereditary succession and largely on primogeniture.
The majority of the ganas were located in or around the Himalayan foothills in eastern India, implying that their foundation predated the transition to kingdoms as clearing woody low-lying hills was considerably easier than clearing the marshy jungles of the plain.	Major Kingdoms generally occupied the fertile alluvial tracts of the Ganga valley.
The discussion topics were presented to the assembly, which assembled in a hall known as Santhagara. Gana-Puraka was in charge of securing the quorum essential for key deliberations. If a unanimous conclusion could not be reached, the council discussed and debated the problems before putting them to a vote. Voting was done using wooden pieces called as salakas, and the salaka-gahapaka (vote collector) enforced honesty and fairness.	Political power was concentrated in the hands of the king, who was advised and helped by ministers and advisory councils such as the Parishad and Sabha. However, when the concept of 'divinity of monarch' emerged and greater emphasis was placed on priestly ceremonies, the importance of people assemblies waned.
The Gana-Sanghas were divided into two classes: the kshatriya rajakula (ruling family) and the dasa-karmakara (slaves and labourers).	Clan allegiance eroded in the kingdoms, and more emphasis was placed on caste loyalty and devotion to the ruler.
Gana-Sanghas were more willing to tolerate unconventional beliefs and were more receptive to individualistic or autonomous thought than the kingdoms. This tolerance was a major reason why two of the most revered gurus of the heterodox sects, namely Mahavira (Jainism, Vajji confederacy) and Buddha (Buddhism, Shakya clan), were able to spread their philosophy more freely in Gana-Sanghas than in kingdoms.	Brahmanical political, social, and religious ideology was more thoroughly embedded in kingdoms.

The Conflict between the Sakyas and Kosalans

- According to Buddhist legend, relations between the Kosalans and Sakyas worsened due to a deception conducted by the latter on Prasenajit:
- Prasenajit, King of Kosala, admired the Buddha and devised the plan to marry into the Sakya clan, to which the Buddha belonged. He asked the Sakyas for the marriage of one of their princesses. The Sakyas were too proud of their heritage to hand over one of their women, but given Prasenajit's influence, they were scared to refuse. So they devised a trick. They passed on Vasabhakkhattiya, a slave girl who was the daughter of a Sakya chief Mahanaman by a slave lady, concealing her poor origins on her mother's side. This marriage produced a son and a girl, Vidudabha and Vajira.

- ❑ Vidudabha paid a visit to his maternal grandfather's house at some point and learned about his mother's background.
- ❑ Prasenajit was also informed.
- ❑ When the king realised he'd been duped, he quickly divorced his wife and son. The Buddha appeased him by informing him that it was the father's social rank that was important, not the mother's. Because of this intercession, Vidudabha and his mother were restored to favour.
- ❑ Vidudabha finally replaced his father as king and massacred the Sakyas in retaliation for their deception.
- ❑ It is impossible to tell for certain whether this narrative has any historical validity.
- ❑ The Kosalan massacre of the Sakyas, on the other hand, became one of many episodes preserved in later Buddhist tradition, and it is vividly portrayed in relief sculpture at various stupa locations.

POLITICAL CONFLICTS AND THE PRE-EMINENCE OF MAGADHA

The ascension of Magadha to a position of political dominance can be understood by a comparative analysis of the Puranic, Buddhist, and Jaina writings. There exist notable disparities in the dynastic sequences as presented in different texts. The Buddhist and Jaina traditions engage in a competitive discourse, looking for recognition and validation from the prominent kings of their era. Concurrently, the Puranas express disapproval towards individuals who exhibit favouritism towards these aforementioned religions.

Magadha's rise to political power began with Bimbisara, a Haryanka dynasty ruler who ruled for 52 years, from 544 to 492 BCE. According to the **Mahavamsa**, he was anointed as king by his father at the age of 15, implying that he was not the founder of his dynasty. He was a contemporary of both **Buddha and Mahavira,** and he respected them equally.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

Was the political structure found in the Janapadas indicative of a form of early democracy comparable to the later system observed in Britain?

Haryanka Dynasty

The initial foundation of the dynasty is attributed to Bimbisara's grandfather around 566 BCE. However, the real consolidation of the dynasty began under Bimbsara.

Bimbisara (544-492 BCE):

- ❑ He was a contemporary of Mahavira and Buddha.
- ❑ His capital was located at Rajgriha (Girivraja) which was nearly impregnable due to its surrounding five hills, all of which had stone walls enclosing their gaps.
- ❑ Initially, he had a rivalry with Pradyota, the king of Avanti, but eventually grew close to him. Bimbisara even dispatched his royal physician, Jivaka, to Ujjain (together with Dakshinapatha) to treat Pradyota's jaundice.
- ❑ He conquered Anga (East Bihar) by defeating its ruler Brahmadatta. This victory provided him access to Champa which was known for its inland and marine trade.
- ❑ He used matrimonial alliances to strengthen his position. Matrimony ties with the various princely houses conferred great diplomatic prestige and cleared the path for Magadha's northward and westward development. He married three women:
  - His first marriage, Mahakoshala (the sister of Prasenjit), was from Kosala. She brought in the region of Kashi as dowry, which brought in a total of one hundred thousand coins.
  - He married Princess Chellana from Vaishali, who was the mother of Ajatashatru his successor.
  - Married to Madra Clan's Daughter which extended his influence into the Punjab region.

Ajatashatru (492 BCE-460 BCE):

- ❑ He was the son of Bimbisara who is thought to have assassinated his father and taken the kingdom because he was eager to rule Magadha.
- ❑ He was the Haryanka dynasty's most powerful and assertive monarch, who pursued his father's expansionist strategy of military conquest.
- ❑ He annexed Kosala, which was controlled by Prasenjit. First, he got into a fight with his maternal uncle Prasenjit, who was upset about how Bimbisara was treated. He requested that Ajatashatru to return the Kashi area, which had been offered as a dowry to his mother. Only after a bloody struggle did Prasenjit agree to give Kashi to Magadha. In the same way, he engaged in combat with the Vaishali chief Chetak, who was his maternal grandfather. However, it took Ajatashatru 16 long years of fighting to finally subdue the Vaishali. Thus he added Vaishali to Magadha at the same time kept his control over Kashi.
- ❑ Used two cutting-edge military weapons:
  - **Mahashilakantaka:** A war engine used to launch those stones like catapults.
  - **Rathamusala:** A chariot with mace for mass murder.
- ❑ Begun fortification of Rajgriha in response to the threat of invasion posed by Avanti's monarch (who had already vanquished the Vatsas of Kaushambi).
- ❑ During his rule, Buddha passed away and the first Buddhist council was constituted.

Ajatashatru's Visit to Buddha

For ancient religious sects, royal patronage was a valuable source of status.

The visit of Ajatashatru to the Buddha was regarded as a significant event in Buddhist history. It is represented in a relief panel from the second century BCE on one of the railing pillars of the western doorway that once stood at the central Indian Buddhist sanctuary of Bharhut.

The first section of the image is carved on the panel's lower left side. It depicts a regal procession led by a monarch riding an elephant, who is followed by his queens, who are also riding elephants. To the right, the king has disembarked his elephant and stands in front of two mango trees, his right hand raised as if to speak. The king and queens stand with their hands folded reverently in the third scene, which is on the far left. In the last scene, on the upper right, the king bows before the footprint-bearing throne, which represents the Buddha.

Udayabhadra (Udayin) (460 BCE – 444 BCE):

- He founded the City of Pataliputra (modern Patna) as the new capital. The choice of Patliputra was crucial as it was strategically located at the heart of the Magadhan kingdom (at the confluence of the Ganga and Son rivers) which stretched from the Himalayas in the north to the Chhotanagpur Hills in the south.
- He was assassinated most probably at the order of Palaka who was the King of Avanti.

Shishunaga Dynasty (413 BCE-345 BCE)

- **Shishunaga:**
  - Shishunaga was an Amatya (high-ranking official) in Varanasi (Banaras), and it is said that the people of Magadha nominated Shishunaga as king after being frustrated by the serial parricides of Udayin's successors.
  - He temporarily relocated the capital to Vaishali.
  - His most significant accomplishment was defeating Avanti (Pradyota Dynasty) and incorporating it into Magadha. This effectively ended Magadha and Avanti's 100-year rivalry.
- **Kalasoka:**
  - He was the son and successor of Shishunaga also known as Kakarvarna (according to the Puranas).
  - The second Buddhist Council was held at Vaishali during his reign.

Nanda Dynasty (First non-Kshatriya Dynasty-345 BCE-321 BCE)

The Shaishunaga dynasty came to a bloody end. The king and his sons were murdered, making way for the Nanda dynasty.

- **Mahapadma Nanda:**
  - He is often referred to as Ugrasena in Pali scriptures because of his enormous army.
  - The Puranas state that he was the son of a Shishunaga dynasty monarch by a Shudra lady, making the Nandas adharmika (those who do not follow the principles of Dharma). The Brahmanical writings claim that he belonged to a low caste, or at least a non-Kshatriya caste. The Nandas are described in Buddhist writings as annatakula, or people of uncertain ancestry.
  - He was the first Indian empire builder, who also held the titles of Sarva-Kshatrantaka (uprooter of the Kshatriyas) and Ekarat (one sovereign who annihilated all other reigning rulers).
  - During his reign, Kalinga was added to Magadha, and a picture of Jina was brought as a victory trophy. Similarly, he also acquired Kosala which had most likely rebelled against him.
  - During his reign, Taxes were collected methodically by appointing officers regularly. He also constructed canals and undertook extensive irrigation work.
- **Dhanananda:**
  - The Nanda dynasty's final significant monarch. He was identified with the Greek classical writers' Agrammes or Xandrames.
  - Alexander, who is credited with having a massive army, is said to have assaulted Punjab during his rule, but his army prevented them from moving closer to Magadha.
  - Credited as the creator of Nandopakramani, a specific measurement standard.
  - He is thought to have been an unjust and arrogant tyrant who taxed the average person heavily. Due to his greed and exploitation, he became very unpopular with the populace. Eventually, Chandragupta Maurya, with the skilful assistance of Kautilya, took advantage of this public animosity to overthrow the Nanda dynasty and establish the Mauryan empire.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

To what degree did caste determine societal roles and perceptions in ancient India? Was there a distinct perception among people when their ruler hailed from a lower caste?

Causes of Magadha's Success

Magadha could gradually establish its dominance over all other Mahajanapads on account of several factors:

- **Geographical Advantages:**
  - **Rich Iron Deposits:** Located near South Bihar's iron reserves, enabling superior weaponry.
  - **Strategically Positioned Capitals:**
    - **Rajgriha (Girivraja):** Natural fortification from surrounding hills, nearly impregnable.
    - **Pataliputra:** Water fort at the confluence of Son and Ganga rivers.
- **Agricultural and Natural Resources:**
  - **Fertile Gangetic Plains:** High productivity with minimal irrigation, providing substantial agricultural surplus.
  - **Forests and Fauna:** Access to timber and elephants, crucial for military superiority over other states reliant on horses and chariots.
- **Military Innovations:**
  - Magadha had a massive military machine with vast infantry, horses, elephants, chariots and also innovative armaments such as rathamusula and mahasilakantika developed by Ajatashatru.
- **Dynamic Leadership:**
  - **Ambitious Rulers:** Notable kings like Bimbisara, Ajatashatru, and Mahapadma Nanda. They employed all fair and foul means at their disposal to enlarge their kingdoms.
  - Also Magadha was inhabited by the Kiratas and Magadhas. Magadha then underwent a racial admixture with the advent of Vedic people. As it was recently Aryanised, it showed more enthusiasm than those kingdoms already under Aryan influence
- **Administrative setup:**
  - The Nandas streamlined an administrative system with vast bureaucracy which dug canals for expansion of agriculture, promoted trade and commerce and collected taxes adding to financial muscle of Magadha.
- **Economic Strength:**
  - **Rise of Trade and Urbanization:** Boost in revenue through tolls from growing trade and urban centres.
  - **Large Standing Army:** Sustained by the state's agricultural surplus and economic wealth.
- **Social Characteristics:**
  - **Unorthodox Society:** A society less bound by traditional norms, contributing to flexibility and innovation in governance and military tactics.

NORTH-WEST INDIA: PERSIAN AND MACEDONIAN INVASIONS

As Magadha grew to be a powerful force in northeast India, smaller principalities and republics gradually amalgamated with it. Such consolidation was not possible given the circumstances in northwest India.

The Mahajanapads of Gandhara, Madras, and Kamboja were engaged in constant warfare. Thus, the north-west frontier could not support the emergence of a strong monarchy like Magadha. In the sixth century BCE, the Persian (Iranian) empire advanced into northwest India by seizing upon this political unrest.

Cyrus, monarch of the Achaemenids (558–529 BCE), was the first king to attack the subcontinent. He was rewarded with a tribute by the inhabitants of Kamboj and Gandhara after leading an army expedition that decimated the city of Kapisha, which was located southeast of the Hindu Kush mountains. Afterwards, Sindh and Punjab to the west of the Indus were acquired by the Persian king Darius in 516 BCE. It seems that the northwest region of the subcontinent was ruled by the Persians before Alexander's conquest of India (around 330 BCE).

Views of Herodotus (Father of Western history-writing) on Gandhara

This area was the twentieth and the most prosperous satrapy (province) of the Persian empire, and paid a tribute of 360 talents of gold, which was not only more than that from all other 28 provinces put together, but was also about one-third of the total revenue of Iran from its Asian provinces. Indian provinces provided mercenaries for the Persian armies fighting against the Greeks in the 5th century BCE. In fact, the army of Xerxes (the successor of Darius) included soldiers from Gandhara.

Impact of Persian Invasion

The 200 years of Indo-Persian contact led to social acculturation as well as political influence. In addition to giving Indo-Persian trade and commerce a boost, it led to the development of cultural relations. One excellent illustration of the Persian influence is the introduction of the Kharoshthi alphabet in northwest India. It was developed from Aramaic, the official language of the Persian empire, and was written from right to left like Arabic. This script is used in several Ashokan inscriptions found in northwestern India. India replicated Persian coins of the **sigloi** type. It's probable that Darius, the king of Persia, served as an inspiration for Ashoka's rock inscriptions from the third century BCE. There is a strong Iranian influence on Ashoka's monuments, particularly in the bell-shaped capitals and the preamble of his edicts.

Alexander's Invasion (327–326 BCE)

- **Alexander's Invasion of India:** Alexander, the son of Philip of Macedonia, invaded India in 326 BCE, marking a significant event in ancient history.
  - The invasion was part of the global power struggle between the Greeks and Persians in the fourth century BCE.

Fig. 4.2: Alexander's Invasion of India

- **Alexander's Motivations and Interests:** Intrigued by India's incredible wealth, Alexander, a student of natural history and geography, sought to unravel the mysteries of the limitless ocean.
  - His military campaign in India was influenced by both geopolitical and intellectual motives.
- **Political Landscape of Northwestern India:** The political climate in northwestern India, around 326 BCE, featured numerous minor autonomous states like Taxila, Punjab (Kingdom of Porus), and Gandhara. The region lacked organized opposition, facilitating Alexander's military advance.
- **Alexander's Indian Campaign:** Crossing the Khyber Pass into India in 326 BCE, Alexander encountered minimal resistance from regional monarchs, except for King Porus in the Hydaspes fight.
  - On demand of his war-tired, homesick troops, Alexander eventually turned back from the Northern Bank of the Beas River.
- **Military Engagements in India:** During his 19-month stay in India, Alexander engaged in military combat with **Gana-Sanghas**, including the **Malloi (Malavas),** as part of his return journey.
  - The encounter with Porus and other local rulers contributed to the complexity of Alexander's Indian campaign.
- **Alexander's Legacy and Demise:** Alexander passed away in **Babylon** in **323 BCE**, leading to the division of his territorial possessions among three Greek leaders.
  - The majority of the conquered states were returned to their rulers who had submitted to Alexander's power during his relatively short Indian conquests

Effect of Alexander's Invasion

Historic Significance of Alexander's Invasion: Alexander's invasion marked a significant historical event, representing the first direct communication between ancient Europe and ancient India.

The consequences of this invasion had far-reaching effects on various aspects of cultural, historical, and chronological understanding.

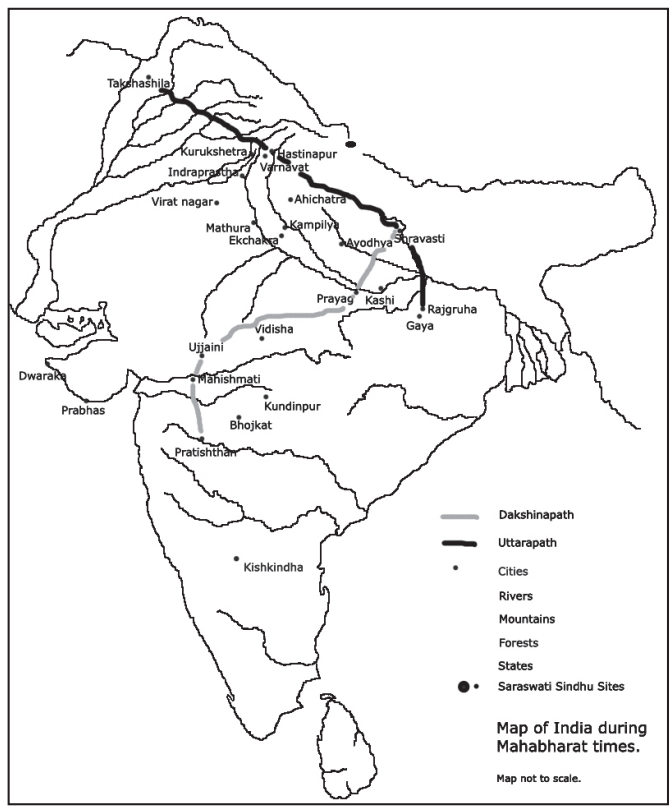


Fig. 4.3: Map of India during Mahabharata Times

- **Impact on Indian History Documentation:** Alexander's historians played a crucial role in preserving topographical, historical, and chronological descriptions of ancient Indian history.
- The well-dated narratives from Alexander's campaign became foundational for establishing a robust chronology of subsequent Indian events.
- **Insights into Ancient Societal Practices:** Travelogues from Alexander's campaign provide valuable socioeconomic information, shedding light on ancient societal practices.
- Topics such as the **sati system**, the **sale of girls in marketplaces**, and unique practices like the **breeding of oxen** in northwest India are discussed.
- **Communication Routes Established:** Alexander's invasion opened up four separate communication routes between India and Europe—three by land and one by sea. This facilitated trade, enabling Greek artisans and traders to engage in commerce with Indians.

- **Cultural Advancements:** A notable cultural advancement resulting from the invasion was the establishment of a global school of arts at **Gandhara**. The interaction between Greek and Indian cultures contributed to the enrichment of artistic and intellectual traditions.
- **Unintended Consequences for Chandragupta Maurya:** Alexander's invasion unintentionally paved the way for Chandragupta Maurya to unite north India.

The destruction of small states and principalities in the northwest by Alexander made the expansion of the Mauryan empire easier and inspired the Mauryas to focus on capturing the northwest frontier.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

To what extent did the encounter between Greek and Indian civilizations during this period contribute to the cross-cultural exchange and the shaping of subsequent historical developments?

SOCIAL AND MATERIAL LIFE IN THE AGE OF THE MAHAJANAPADAS

- **Family Dynamics within the Caste System:** Despite growing socioeconomic disparities, family relationships remained crucial and became integrated into the caste system.
  - The terms **Nati and Nati-Kulani** referred to extended kin groups, with Kula representing the extended patrilineal family and Natakas encompassing both maternal and paternal relations.
- **Monastic Regulations and Familial Bonds:** Monastic regulations, while advocating renunciation, permitted family relationships, highlighting the enduring significance of familial bonds.
  - The use of terms like Nati and Nati-Kulani in the context of monasticism underscores the complexity of familial ties in the face of renunciation.
- **Patriarchal Authority and Women's Subjugation:** Enhanced patriarchal authority in households contributed to the increased subjugation of women.
  - Tight restrictions on women's sexuality were deemed necessary for upholding the endogamous caste system and facilitating patrilineal property transfer.
- **Inferiority of Women in Religious Writings:** Various religious texts from Buddhism, Jainism, and Brahmanicism emphasized the perceived inferiority of women.
  - Prescribed roles for women and codes of conduct were outlined, reinforcing patriarchal norms.
- **Preference for Male Offspring:** Ongoing preference for male children over daughters persisted, reflecting the deeply ingrained patriarchal nature of households.
  - Sons were considered essential for lineage continuity and the performance of ancestral rites, as highlighted in the Buddha's discourse with **King Prasenjit.**
- **Caste System and Varna Division:** A clear division into four varnas—**Shudras, Vaishyas, Kshatriyas, and Brahmans**—was evident in society. Each varna had defined roles, with Shudras serving all social groups, priests and teachers in the Brahmanical order, peasants and taxpayers as Vaishyas and rulers and warriors as Kshatriyas.
- **Social Restrictions on Shudras:** Shudras faced social restrictions, being limited to roles as **slaves, artisans, or agricultural labourers** for the higher varna individuals (Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaishyas).
  - Higher varna individuals not only avoided socializing with Shudras but also refrained from marrying them, reinforcing social hierarchy and discrimination.
- **Emergence of NBPW Phase and Urbanization:** Archaeological findings, early Buddhist Pali texts, and Sanskrit Sutras indicate the commencement of the NBPW phase and India's second urbanization around the sixth century BCE.
- **Characteristics of Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW):** NBPW, a glossy pottery used as elite tableware, displayed fine fabric. Notably, it was not exclusively black, varied in colours, and was mostly found in southern India. Patterns were occasionally painted in light vermillion and yellow.
- **Punch-Marked Coins and Monetary Evolution:** The NBPW phase marked the initiation of money use in the subcontinent, evident from the discovery of punch-marked coins at NBPW sites. Burnt money, metal currency, and ring wells also appeared during this phase.
- **Expansion of Settlements and Towns in Ganga Valley:** Between 600–300 BCE, there was a significant expansion in the number and size of settlements and towns in the Ganga Valley. Sanskrit and Pali's writings described various town types, such as **Pura, nigama, Rajdhani, nagarka, and mahanagara.**
- **Craftsmen and Merchants in Urban Centers:** Towns served as significant hubs for craftsmen and merchants, organized into guilds. The Setthi, a prominent businessman, played a role in lending and trading. Crafts were often passed down within families.
- **Trade Networks and Trans-Regional Routes:** Crafted goods, including pottery, textiles, and ivory articles, were traded over long distances. Cities were interconnected along trade routes and riverbanks. Dakshinapatha and Uttarapatha were prominent trans-regional routes connecting southern and northern India.
- **Subcontinental Trade and Precious Commodities:** Thriving subcontinental trade occurred along both eastern and western regions. Internal trade routes connected with exterior routes, facilitated the exchange of **precious stones, gold, lapis lazuli, jade, textiles, sandalwood, and pearls.**

- **Sea Travel and Trade Facilitation:** Sea travel and trade were frequent, as mentioned in Pali's writings. Customs officers and toll officials collected trade taxes. Rajabhatas, special royal officials, ensured the safety of travellers. The use of money, including Nishka and Satamana, facilitated trade.
- **Evolution of Coinage and Monetary Practices:** The earliest coins, **mainly silver** with some copper, were punch-marked, featuring various symbols like **hills, trees, bulls, fish, and elephants.** Pali scriptures highlighted the widespread use of money, covering costs and wages, with terms like **vetan and vaitanika** mentioned in **Panini's Ashtadhyayi.**
- **Rural-Urban Exchange:** Agriculturists in villages played a crucial role in supplying food to non-agriculturist residents in towns. In return, town artisans and dealers provided rural residents with essential goods such as clothing and tools, establishing a system of reciprocal support.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

In what ways did the emergence of the Northern Black Polished Ware phase and the associated developments in coinage, trade networks, and urban expansion reshape both rural and urban life within the Ganga Valley during the Mahajanapada era?

Activities in Times of Adversity

- According to the **Gautama Dharmasutra** (7), varna responsibilities might be violated during times of difficulty within specific boundaries.
- The primary focus is on **Brahmana**. These guidelines apply at times of difficulty.
- A Brahmana can follow and obey **a non-Brahmana who provides Vedic instruction**. Upon completion of the studies, the Brahmana becomes the more honourable option.
- One can educate, provide sacrifices, and receive presents from all classes, with each employment representing a higher level of honour. **If these jobs are unavailable, one can live by Kshatriya or Vaishya occupations.**
- **The following goods are prohibited for trade:**
  - perfumes, seasonings, prepared foods, sesame seeds, hemp/linen cloth, skins, dyed or washed garments, milk, milk products, roots, fruits, flowers, medicines, honey, meat, grass, water, poisons, slaughter animals, and humans, barren cows, heifers, and pregnant cows.
  - Some argue against trading land, rice, barley, goats, lambs, horses, bulls, milk-cows, and oxen.
  - Bartering is limited to seasonings and animals, but not salt, cooked food, or sesame seeds.
  - Uncooked food can be exchanged for equal amounts of cooked food for immediate use.
- If everything else fails, **one can survive by any occupation save Shudra**, with some allowing it when life is at stake.
- Despite this, one cannot associate with that class or consume forbidden food. When their lives are at jeopardy, **Brahmanas may utilise weapons, while Kshatriyas may use Vaishya vocations**.

- **Types of Villages in Pali Writings:** Pali writings, particularly the Vinay Pitaka, suggest three types of villages (grama):
  - **Typical Villages:** Characterized by diverse communities and castes, led by a headman (gramabhojaka, gramini, or gramakas) responsible for maintaining peace, order, and tax collection.
  - **Suburban Communities:** Resembling craft villages, serving as marketplaces for various communities like carpenters, reedmakers, saltmakers, and chariot makers, connecting city and rural areas.
  - **Border Settlements:** Also known as Anamika-grama, situated on the outskirts blending into forests, inhabited by hunters and fowlers relying on rudimentary subsistence techniques.
- **Village Life and Administration:**
  - **Landholdings:** Varied in quantity, village lands were divided into cultivable portions distributed among families.
  - **Wealthy Peasants:** Known as "**Gahapatis**," they farmed plots individually or with hired agricultural labourers (**dasa-kammakara**).
  - **Irrigation Oversight:** Village headmen supervised the collaborative excavation of irrigation channels.
  - **Taxation System:** Peasants paid a tax equivalent to one-sixth (1/6) of produce, collected by royal agents without intermediaries between the state and peasantry.
  - **Merchants and Brahmanas:** Some villages allocated to large merchants and Brahmanas (brahmadeyas) for personal use, without granting administrative power.
- **Emergence of Private Property and Agricultural Advancements:**
  - **Private Property:** The mention of land sales and gifts suggests the emergence of the concept of private property.
  - **Agricultural Advancements:** Agriculture flourished due to the use of the iron ploughshare and fertile alluvial soil, contributing to the development of a sophisticated food-producing economy.
  - **Crop Diversity:** Mainly rice cultivation, with additional crops such as barley, sugarcane, cotton, lentils, and millets.
- **Insights from Atranjikhera Excavation Site:** The Atranjikhera excavation site in Etah, UP, provides significant insights into the transition from rural to urban living during this period.

Administrative System

- **Administrative Hierarchy:** The king, assisted by officials, held the highest official status in the governance structure.
  - Ayuktas played a supporting role to higher officials known as Mahamatras/Amatyas, likely responsible for executive, judicial, and military functions.
- **Roles of High Officials: Mahamatras/Amatyas** fulfilled key roles, including chief accountant, minister (**Mantrin**), commander (**Senanayaka**), judge, and head of the royal household.
  - Priests from the Brahmana caste were the primary candidates for high positions, indicating their significant influence.
- **Influence of Brahmana Priests:** Brahmana priests held substantial power and were the main source of candidates for high positions and ministerial roles.
  - Buddhist literature, such as the **Mahaparinibbana Sutta**, highlights influential ministers like **Vassakara of Magadha.**
- **Political Machinations:** Vassakara's success in sowing discord among the **Lichchhavis of Vaishali,** as narrated in the Mahaparinibbana Sutta, facilitated Ajatashatru's subjugation of the Gana-Sangha of Vajjis.
- **Professional Army and Fiscal Framework:** The establishment of a sizable professional army indicated a significant increase in governmental power.
  - A strong fiscal framework was essential for maintaining such a large army, with balisadhakas collecting one-sixth of the yield, originally a voluntary gift during the Vedic era.
- **Taxation and Forced Labor:** Peasants, artisans, and dealers paid taxes, and forced labour for royal purposes was imposed. The ability to write documents likely facilitated tax assessment and collection.
- **Transformation of Governance Structures:** Traditional popular gatherings like **sabha and samiti** diminished, replaced by a limited advisory group called the **parishad**, consisting solely of Brahmanas.
  - This transformation reflected a shift in the decision-making and advisory mechanisms within the governance system.

Legal and Social System

The origins of the Indian legal and judicial systems trace back to this historical era. Initially, tribal law governed people without class distinctions.

- **Impact of Caste and Varna System:** With the deep-rooted influence of caste groupings and the varna system, legal preferences shifted toward favouring higher varnas.
  - The varna system became the basis for both criminal and civil law.
  - The varna system influenced legal perspectives, linking purity and moral behaviour to the perceived superiority of certain varnas.
  - Shudras faced limitations, losing both legal and religious rights and being marginalized in society.
- **Legal Disparities and Treatment of Crimes:** Crimes against Brahmanas and others incurred severe consequences, administered harshly by Shudras.
  - In contrast, crimes against Shudras were treated more leniently, reflecting disparities in the legal system.
- **Retributive Law and Royal Agents:** Retributive law, characterized by the principle of **"a tooth for a tooth" and "an eye for an eye,"** governed criminal acts.
  - Both civil and criminal law were administered by royal agents, emphasizing retribution for offenses.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

How does the historical influence of rigid varna divisions and social restrictions faced by Shudras during India's second urbanization resonate in contemporary urban centers, impacting social interactions, economic activities, and opportunities?

Varna and Jati

Varna and jati are related social classifications, although they are distinct. There are numerous variations between them, which have evolved throughout time:

- There are four varnas (or five if non-varnas are included), whereas the number of jatis (castes and sub-castes) is incalculable and continues to increase.
- Varna and jati are hierarchical orders. While the ranking of the four varnas is fixed, the jatis have a fluidity within specific ranges.
  - In Brahmanical tradition, the Brahmana is at the top and the Shudra is at the bottom. In Buddhist tradition, the Kshatriya ranks first and the Brahmana ranks second, but this order remains fixed.
  - Ranking jatis is not conceivable on a single scale from highest to lowest. While Brahmanas are often at the top of the caste hierarchy and 'untouchable' tribes are at the bottom, the ranks between them can be fluid.
  - Caste ranking varies by location and locality, influenced by factors such as land control, money, and political/military strength. Caste ranking can be disputed, even among Brahmanas and 'outcastes'. Recently, castes have attempted to 'upgrade' themselves through Sanskritization, but have also experienced 'downgrades'. Upgrading sometimes involves adopting practises associated with upper castes, such as vegetarianism, women's home withdrawal, and employment changes.

- Regulations for social interaction and food acceptance by upper varnas from particular Shudras were restricted, while regulations for commensality were explicitly defined and established for the jatis. These were based on purity and pollution concepts.
- Varnas were not endogamous, as intervarna marriages (namely anuloma) were allowed. Although some hypergamous partnerships were recognised, the jatis were traditionally endogamous.
- Varnas are linked to various occupations, while jatis were once affiliated with specific occupations, with some available to all. **Some feel that function is more significant than birth in the varna system.**

Varna and jati are linked because caste members typically claim to belong to a specific varna category. The jati system was linked to the varna system to establish its legitimacy in the Brahmanical tradition.

CONCLUSION

The period between 600 BCE to 300 BCE represents the beginning of the historical era in north India. It was an age when the growing social, economic, and political intricacies of the centuries before showed themselves in the creation of cities. This century was known as the Age of Exploration and Discovery. However, the vast majority of people remained to make their homes in rural communities. The development of urbanism gave rise to new socioeconomic classes and elites. The institution of jati, often known as caste, began to take shape during this time. The bolstering of patriarchal power within the context of the household ultimately resulted in a greater subjection of women. During these ages, there was a significant rise in the popularity of the concept of renunciation, in addition to an intense degree of intellectual discussion and inquiry. Jainism and Buddhism were two of the numerous philosophical schools that built long-lasting monastic organisations that were closely associated with their lay followers. Jainism and Buddhism both originated in India.

Buddhism

5

The sixth century BCE marked a significant era of religious turbulence, during which influential thinkers such as Confucius in China, Zoroaster in Iran, and Parmenides in Greece challenged established socio-religious norms, placing a heightened emphasis on ethical and moral values. This transformative period was not exclusive to these regions, as India experienced its own dynamic shift. In this context, a major alternative religion, **Buddhism,** emerged and flourished.

Buddhism diverged from prevailing beliefs by asserting that genuine happiness did not reside in material wealth or the mere performance of rituals. Instead, they advocated for principles such as nonviolence, charity, frugality, and exemplary social conduct as the true sources of fulfillment. These religious movements sought to redefine the spiritual landscape by challenging conventional notions and redirecting the focus towards a more compassionate and virtuous way of life.

LIFE OF BUDDHA

The hagiography, or sacred biography, of Siddhartha Gautama, commonly known as the **Buddha**, unfolds through various **canonical texts** such as the **Sutta and Vinaya Pitakas,** and is further expounded in later works like **Buddhacharita, Mahavastu, and Nidanakatha.**

Buddha is represented in five forms:

1. Lotus and Bull – Birth
2. Horse – Renunciation
3. Bodhi Tree – Nirvana
4. Dhammachakra Pravartana – First Sermon
5. Stupa- Parinirvana or death

Various Life Stages of Buddha

- **Birth of Budha:** Gautama Buddha or Siddhartha was born **in 563 BCE on Vaishakha Poornima Day at Lumbini (near Kapilavastu, situated in the foothills of Nepal).** His father was **Suddhodana, the chief of the republican Sakya clan**, and mother was **Mahamaya, a princess of the Kosala dynasty.**
- **Early Life of Budha:**
  - Siddhartha's early life was one of luxury and comfort. His father kept him away from the sorrows of life. **At the early age of 16 years, he was married to Yashodhara and had a son named Rahula.**
  - Upon reaching the **age of 29**, Siddhartha made the decision to **relinquish his royal lifestyle in search of truth**, influenced by his experiences with the harsh realities of aging, illness, death, and asceticism.He rode in his chariot, pulled by his favourite horse, Kanthaka, and driven by his charioteer, Channa, far away from the city. He cut his hair and sent it along with his discarded garments and jewellery to his father. This is known as **Mahabhinishkraman or the Great Going Forth.**
- **Enlightenment Period of Budha:**
  - He wandered for six years, engaging in meditation under established teachers but found their teachings unsatisfactory. He then practiced **severe austerities with five ascetic companions,** until realizing their futility. Rejected by his companions, **Siddhartha** resolved to attain enlightenment.
  - After becoming an ascetic, Gautama Buddha went to **Alara Kalama**. He taught Sankhya philosophy in Vaishali to Gautama Buddha and also taught dhyana. After reaching the highest point, Buddha left Alara and went to another teacher named Uddalaka Ramaputra, who taught immaterial attainments to Buddha.
  - He sat under the Bodhi tree at Uruvela, on the banks of the river Niranjana in Gaya, Magadha (Bihar). Siddhartha achieved Nirvana at the age of 35. This momentous event marked his **enlightenment**, and he came to be known as **the Buddha,** the Enlightened One. Despite attempts to destroy the Bodhi tree, it continued to thrive, becoming a symbol of resilience and reverence for Buddhists.
- **Buddha's Teaching:** The Buddha's teachings, encapsulated in his **first sermon at Sarnath**, focused on the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, leading to the cessation of suffering. He spent over four decades spreading his doctrine, establishing the Sangha, an order of monks and nuns, and guiding followers toward enlightenment.
- **Buddha's Representation:** The Buddha's representation in five forms, symbolizing key stages in his life, includes **the lotus and bull for his birth,** the **horse** representing his **renunciation,** the **Bodhi tree** marking his **enlightenment** at Mahabodhi, the **Dhammachakra Pravartana** signifying his **first sermon,** and footprints representing his attainment of Nirvana.
- **Death of Budha:** Ultimately, the Buddha attained Parinibbana at the age of 80 in Kusinara, leaving behind

the profound words, "All composite things decay, strive diligently." His enduring legacy lives on through the teachings of Buddhism, influencing countless lives and shaping spiritual thought across the centuries.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

What drove Lord Buddha's decision to travel extensively during his spiritual quest, and how did this nomadic lifestyle aid in his search for enlightenment?

BUDDHISM AND ITS ORIGIN

Buddhism, founded by Siddhartha Gautama in the 6th century BCE in ancient India, is a major world religion with millions of followers. The core teachings of Buddhism revolve around the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path.

- The **Four Noble Truths** articulate the nature of suffering (dukkha), its origin, its cessation, and the path leading to its end.
- The **Eightfold Path** encompasses ethical and mental guidelines for leading a virtuous life, emphasizing right understanding, intention, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and concentration.
- Buddhists seek to attain enlightenment, known as Nirvana, through meditation, ethical conduct, and the cultivation of wisdom, aiming to break free from the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth (samsara).
- Buddhism has various schools and traditions, with **Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana** being the major branches. It has spread across Asia and beyond, influencing cultures, philosophy, and art.
- Central to Buddhism is the belief in impermanence, the interconnectedness of all things, and the idea that suffering can be transcended through the realization of one's true nature and the practice of compassion towards all living beings.

Cause of Origin of Buddhism

- **Kshatriyas' Resistance against Brahminical Domination**
  - The societal structure of that era was characterized by the explicit division into **four varnas: Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras.**
  - Among these, the Kshatriyas, who held roles as **rulers and warriors,** occupied the second position in the varna hierarchy, and the Brahmanas maintained dominance .
  - So the **Kshatriyas** vehemently opposed the ritualistic control exercised by the Brahmanas and protested against the various privileges such as receiving gifts and being exempt from both taxation and punishment enjoyed by the priestly class.
- **Agrarian Economy Transformation**
  - The emergence of a new agricultural economy in the **sixth century BCE** brought about a significant shift in economic and political dynamics, relocating the focal point from **Haryana and Western UP to Eastern UP and Bihar.**
  - This transition was motivated by the availability of **greater rainfall around 100 cm and more fertile land** in eastern Uttar Pradesh and Northern and Southern Bihar.
  - With the **exploitation of iron ore** resources in **Bihar** and adjacent areas becoming more feasible, there was a surge in the use of **iron tools and ploughshares**. This technological advancement facilitated the clearing of thick forest cover, enabling cultivation in previously untapped areas.
  - The adoption of iron ploughshares in this evolving agricultural economy necessitated the use of bullocks for efficient ploughing. Consequently, **animal husbandry** became integral to the flourishing of this new agrarian system. However, a hindrance arose from the Vedic tradition of **animal sacrifice**, leading to the indiscriminate killing of cattle.
  - This practice posed a threat to the progress of the burgeoning **agricultural economy.** In response to this conflict, a critical need emerged to curtail the widespread slaughter of animals for the stability and prosperity of the evolving agrarian society.
  - So Buddhism, which gained prominence during this period, emerged as a promising ideology for the peasant masses. Advocating principles of nonviolence, these philosophical movements strongly opposed any form of animal sacrifice.
- **Patronage of Buddhism by Vaishyas and Mercantile Groups**
  - During the era of the sixth century BCE, often referred to as the period of the **second urbanization in the Indian subcontinent**, a noteworthy trend emerged among the Vaishyas and other mercantile groups.
  - The evidence of the flourishing trade during this period is exemplified by the discovery of numerous **silver and copper Punch-Marked Coins (PMC) by numismatists.**
  - Between 600 and 300 BCE, more than sixty towns and cities, including Patliputra, Rajagriha, Shravasti, Varanasi, Vaishali, Champa, Kaushambi, and Ujjaini, underwent significant growth. These urban centers became hubs for craft production and trade, attracting a substantial population of artisans and merchants.
  - The economic progress and the rise of the Vaishyas and other mercantile groups created a desire for a **better social position** than what was accorded by the Brahmanas within the existing varna system.

- Buddhism, distinguished by indifference to the established varna hierarchy, became attractive alternatives for these **aspiring social classes.**
- To solidify their allegiance, the Vaishyas and other mercantile groups actively patronized non-Vedic religions, particularly Buddhism, through substantial donations.

❑ **Embrace of Simple, Ascetic and Peace-Centered Principles**

- The transformative changes brought about by advancements in agriculture, the evolution of trade, the introduction of money, and the **process of urbanization** had profound implications for the fabric of society.
- As these changes unfolded, the **traditional ideals of equality and brotherhood** underwent a shift, giving way to emerging issues of inequality and social conflict.
- This societal transformation manifested in rising problems such as **violence, cruelty, theft, hatred, and falsehood,** prompting a collective yearning for relief among the general populace.
- Amidst these challenges, there was a widespread desire among common people to revert to a simpler, more primitive, and uncorrupted way of life.
- The established norms seemed to be fraught with complexities, and individuals sought solace from the growing social problems.
- In this context, the advent of new religions, notably Buddhism, **carrying messages of peace and social equality,** as well as advocating for a simple and puritan ascetic lifestyle, resonated deeply with the aspirations of the people.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

In what ways did Buddhism, as an offshoot of Hinduism, exhibit convergence or divergence from its parent religion over time?

LITERATURE RELATED TO BUDDHISM

Gautama Buddha and the various dimensions of Buddhism predominantly stems from early Buddhist literature, which can be broadly categorized into **canonical and non-canonical texts**.

Canonical Texts

Canonical Texts are texts which are directly associated with Gautama Buddha in some manner. In essence, these texts establish the fundamental tenets and principles of Buddhism, exemplified by the Tripitakas, also known as the Pali canon.

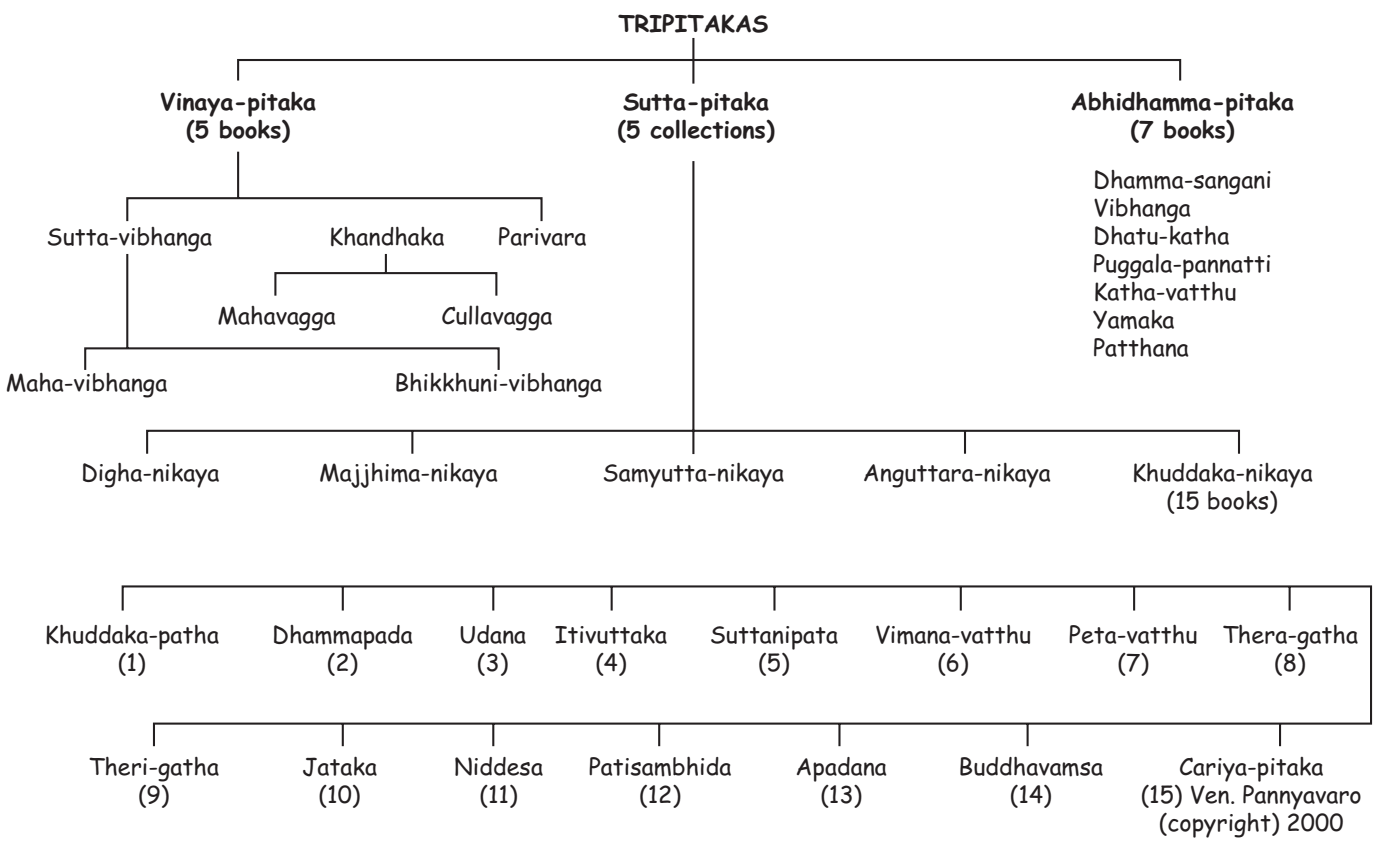


Fig. 5.1: Compilations of Buddhist teachings

Tripitaka(Pali Canon): The Tipitaka (in Pali) and **Tripitaka (in Sanskrit)**, both meaning 'The Three Baskets/Collections,' stand as one of the earliest compilations of Buddhist teachings, **originally inscribed on long, narrow leaves.** This collection, commonly referred to as the 'Three Baskets,' was meticulously transcribed and categorized by **Buddhist monks, giving rise to its distinctive name.** Recognized as a fundamental set of scriptures across all branches of Buddhism, the Tripitaka comprises three main books known as th**e Sutta (conventional teaching), the Vinaya (disciplinary code),** and **the Abhidhamma (moral psychology).**

- **Sutta Pitaka (Sutra/Basket of Discourses):** These are **Buddha's discourses** on various **doctrinal issues presented** in dialogue form. These texts, also known as **'Buddhavachana'** or 'the word of the **Buddha,'** are considered to contain the actual words spoken by the Buddha. With rare exceptions, the authority of the **Sutta Pitaka** is universally acknowledged by all Buddhist schools. The discourses are arranged based on the manner in which they were originally delivered.
- **Vinaya Pitaka (Discipline Basket):** This comprises rules governing the conduct of monks and nuns within the monastic order (Sangha). It includes the **Patimokka**, a list of transgressions against monastic discipline along with corresponding atonements. In addition to monastic regulations, the Vinaya texts incorporate doctrinal expositions, ritual texts, biographical stories, and elements of the 'Jatakas' or 'birth stories.'
- **Abhidhamma Pitaka (Basket of Higher Teachings):** It involves a **comprehensive study** and **systematization of the teachings found in the Sutta Pitaka.** It employs summaries, questions and answers, lists, and other analytical methods to delve into the profound aspects of Buddhist philosophy.

The three Pitakas are further divided into Nikayas or books. For example, the Sutta Pitaka consists of five Nikayas:

- **Digha Nikaya:** Collection of long discourses.
- **Majjhima Nikaya:** Collection of medium-length discourses.
- **Samyutta Nikaya:** Collection of kindred sayings.
- **Anguttara Nikaya:** Collection of discourses arranged in accordance with number.
- **Khuddaka Nikaya:** Smaller collection, which is subdivided into fifteen books. Prominent among them are the **Jatakas** (stories of the Buddha's previous births), **Dhammapada** (verses dealing with ethical sayings), **Niddesa** (expositions), **Buddhavamsa** (the history of Buddha), **Patisambhida** (analytical knowledge), **the Theragatha and Therigatha** (songs of Buddhist monks and nuns).

Non-canonical Texts (Semi-canonical Texts)

These texts do not comprise the Buddha's sayings but encompass commentaries, observations on canonical texts, treatises on the Dharma/Dhammapada, historical information, quotations, definitions, grammars, and other writings in languages such as Pali, Tibetan, Chinese, and other East Asian languages. Among the noteworthy non-canonical texts are:

- **Milindapanho:** This Pali text features a dialogue on various philosophical topics between the Indo-Greek king Milinda/Menander and the monk Nagasena.
- **Nettipakarana (The Book of Guidance):** This text provides a coherent account of the Buddha's teachings. The Nettipakarana is a mythological Buddhist scripture, sometimes included in the Khuddaka Nikaya of Theravada Buddhism's Pali Canon. The main theme of this text is Buddhist Hermeneutics through a systematization of the Buddha's teachings.
- **The Avadanashataka**: It is also called **"Century of Noble Deeds"** is an anthology in Sanskrit which contains some collection of Buddhist narratives compiled from the second to fifth centuries CE
- **Visuddhimagga (The Path to Purity):** Authored by Buddhaghosa, it delves into the development from purity of discipline to nibbana/enlightenment.
- **Nidanakatha:** This text presents the initial connected life story of Buddha.
- **Dipavamsa and Mahavamsa:** Both written in Pali, these texts encompass historical and mythical accounts of the Buddha's life, Buddhist councils, Ashoka, and the introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka.
- **Mahavastu:** Composed in mixed Sanskrit–Prakrit, this text lays down the sacred biography, or hagiography, of the Buddha.

These non-canonical texts play a crucial role in supplementing and elaborating upon the teachings and events found in the canonical scriptures. They offer valuable insights into the historical, philosophical, and narrative dimensions of Buddhism, enriching our understanding of the religion and its development over time.

BUDDHIST COUNCILS

The First Buddhist Council

Time: 483 BCE
Place: Rajgriha
Ruler: Ajatashatru
President: Mahakassappa

The First Buddhist Council, convened in 483 BCE at Rajgriha, holds historical significance as it occurred shortly after the passing of the Buddha. It was organized under the rule of **Ajatashatru** and Chairmanship of **Mahakassappa**. This council played a crucial role in organizing and preserving the Buddha's teachings.

Key Outcomes:

The primary purpose of the First Buddhist Council was to systematize and categorize the extensive teachings of the

Buddha. The outcome of this council was the classification of the Buddha's teachings into Two distinct categories or 'baskets,' known as Pitaka- **Vinay Pitaka** and **Sutta Pitaka.**

Significance:

- The First Buddhist Council played a pivotal role in ensuring the systematic transmission of the Buddha's teachings.
- By categorizing his teachings into these three baskets, the council not only preserved the authenticity of the Buddha's words but also established a structured framework for the practice and propagation of Buddhism.
- Mahakassappa, as the president, played a crucial role in overseeing this monumental task, laying the foundation for the continued dissemination of Buddhist philosophy and ethics.

The Second Buddhist Council

Time: 383 BCE
Place: Vaishali
Ruler: Kalasoka
President: Sabbakami

The Second Buddhist Council, convened in **383 BCE** at Vaishali under the **rule of Kalasoka** and chairmanship of **Sabakami**. It holds historical significance in the early development of Buddhist traditions. This council aimed to address and settle disputes arising from certain practices among Buddhist monks, particularly in western India.

Objective:

The primary objective of the Second Buddhist Council was to resolve a growing debate surrounding specific practices of Buddhist monks. The disagreements, especially prevalent in western India, led to the need for a council to clarify and standardize the monastic code.

Key Outcome

The council resulted in a significant schism between two major factions:

- **Sthaviravadins (Elders):** This group, which remained at the council, identified themselves as the Elders (Thera in Pali). They believed that their practices aligned with the original spirit of the Buddha's teachings and sought to preserve the conservative interpretation of the monastic rules.
- **Mahasanghikas (Great Community):** The opposing group, known as the Great Community (Mahasanghika in Sanskrit), interpreted the Buddha's teachings more **liberally.** They believed their interpretation was true to the intentions of the Buddha, emphasizing a more flexible approach to the monastic code.

Evolution of Thervada and Mahayana Buddhism

The schism between the **Sthaviravadins and Mahasanghikas** laid the foundation for the evolution of two major branches of Buddhism:

- **Theravada Buddhism:**
  - The Sthaviravadins, or Elders, later evolved into the Theravada tradition. Theravada Buddhism, often known as the "Teaching of the Elders," is regarded to be the earliest type of Buddhism.
  - Emphasizing a conservative interpretation, Theravada Buddhism became prevalent in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. Buddhists who practise Theravada Buddhism are known as Arhats.
- **Mahayana Buddhism:**
  - The Mahasanghikas, or Great Community, laid the groundwork for Mahayana Buddhism. It considers Buddha as God and worships idols of Buddhas & Bodhisattvas.
  - Embracing a more liberal interpretation, Mahayana Buddhism became widespread in East Asia, Central Asia, and beyond.

Other important information:

- Sautrantika and Sammitiya were the sects of Buddhism.
- Sarvastivadin was a Buddhist sect that held that the constituents of phenomena were not wholly momentary, but existed forever in a latent form. This belief is known as "Sarvastivada" and is one of the two main schools of Hinayana Buddhism

The Second Buddhist Council, while initially aimed at resolving disputes, inadvertently contributed to the early sectarian divisions within Buddhism, setting the stage for the development of distinct traditions with diverse interpretations of the Buddha's teachings.

The Third Buddhist Council

Time: 250 BCE
Place: Patliputra
Ruler: Ashoka
President: Mogaliputta Tissa

The Third Buddhist Council, convened in 250 BCE in Patliputra under the patronage of Emperor Ashoka and presided over by Mogaliputta Tissa. It played a crucial role in the history of Buddhism. This council was specifically organized with the objective of purifying the Buddhist movement by addressing opportunistic factions that had emerged.

Key Outcome

- **Purification of the Buddhist Movement:** The primary focus of the Third Buddhist Council was to cleanse the Buddhist Sangha from what were perceived as opportunistic elements and divergent interpretations. Emperor Ashoka, driven by a desire to restore the purity of the Buddha's teachings, sought to eliminate any deviations that had crept into the Buddhist community.
- **Compilation Of Abhidhamma Pitaka:** It involves a **comprehensive study** and **systematization of the teachings found in the Sutta Pitaka.**

- **Origin of Theravada School:** During the Third Council, the Theravada school, representing the conservative and orthodox faction, gained prominence. The council emphasized adherence to the original teachings of the Buddha, as preserved in the Pali Canon. This marked the formalization and codification of the Theravada tradition.
- **Tripitaka in Pali Language:** A significant outcome of the Third Council was the codification of the Tripitaka, the traditional Buddhist scriptures, in the Pali language. This effort aimed to standardize the sacred texts, making them more accessible to the monastic community and followers.
- **Missionary Activities:** Emperor Ashoka, recognizing the global significance of Buddhism, utilized the council as a platform to plan and send Buddhist missionaries to various countries. These missionaries played a crucial role in spreading Buddhist teachings beyond the Indian subcontinent.
- **Legacy:** The Third Buddhist Council, by purifying the Buddhist movement and solidifying the **Theravada tradition,** left a lasting legacy. **Theravada Buddhism** became prevalent in **Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia,** maintaining a conservative approach to the teachings of the Buddha.

In summary, the Third Buddhist Council, held under Emperor Ashoka's patronage, marked a critical juncture in the history of Buddhism, leading to the consolidation of the Theravada school and the propagation of Buddhist principles to diverse regions through missionary endeavors.

The Fourth Buddhist Council

The Fourth Buddhist Council, believed by some to be two separate council meetings, took place in the 1st century CE in Kashmir under the patronage of King Kanishka and the leadership of President **Vasumitra**. This council played a pivotal role in the division of Buddhism into the Mahayana and Hinayana sects.

Time: 1st Century CE
Place: Kashmir
Ruler: Kanishka
President: Vasumitra

Division into Mahayana and Hinayana:

The most significant outcome of the Fourth Buddhist Council was the formal division of Buddhism into two major sects: Mahayana and Hinayana (also known as Theravada). This division was rooted in philosophical and doctrinal differences, leading to distinctive paths of practice and interpretation.

Possible Dual Councils:

There is a historical debate about whether the Fourth Buddhist Council represents two distinct council meetings. One account suggests that the Theravada school held its council in the 1st century BCE in **Tambapanni** (Sri Lanka) under the rule of **King Vattagamani-Abaya**. The second council, associated with the **Sarvastivada school,** took place in Kashmir around the 1st century CE. Both councils contributed to the doctrinal developments within their respective traditions.

Theravada Council in Tambapanni:

The Theravada council in Tambapanni, Sri Lanka, is said to have focused on the preservation and recitation of the Pali Canon. It played a crucial role in maintaining the purity of Theravada teachings.

Sarvastivada Council in Kashmir:

The Sarvastivada school, which was active in Kashmir, conducted its council around the same time. This council is associated with the emergence of the Abhidharma literature, which systematically expounds on Buddhist doctrine.

Legacy:

The Fourth Buddhist Council(s) left a lasting legacy by shaping the course of Buddhist history. The division into Mahayana and Hinayana marked a significant divergence in philosophical and doctrinal perspectives, influencing the development of distinct Buddhist traditions.

In summary, the Fourth Buddhist Council(s) in Kashmir, occurring around the 1st century CE, played a pivotal role in the formalization of the Mahayana and Hinayana sects, contributing to the diversity and richness of Buddhist thought and practice.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

Where do you believe Buddhism finds its historical origins and spiritual roots amidst the ongoing debate between India and Nepal?

DOCTRINES OF BUDDHISM

Core Tenets of Buddhism

The core tenets of Buddhism, encapsulated in the **Ariya-Sachchani (Four Noble Truths), Ashtangika-Marga (Eightfold Path), Middle Path, Social Code of Conduct, and the ultimate goal of Attainment of Nibbana/Nirvana,** form the foundational teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, known as the **Buddha.**

Four Noble Truths

The profound insights that Siddhartha Gautama, later known as the Buddha, gained during his quest for enlightenment led to the formulation of the **Four Noble Truths**, which stand as the cornerstone of Buddhist teachings:

1. **The Truth of Suffering (Dukkha):** According to the Buddha, everything is inherently marked by suffering (dukkha). This concept extends beyond the immediate experience of pain and sorrow; it encompasses the inherent **unsatisfactoriness** and **impermanence** of all phenomena. The Truth of Suffering acknowledges not only the actual anguish one may endure but also the potential for suffering in the cyclical nature of life.
2. **The Truth of the Cause of Suffering (Samudaya):** Suffering is an integral aspect of existence, and the

Buddha identified its root cause as desire (Trishna). The ceaseless craving, attachment, and clinging to impermanent things lead to dissatisfaction and suffering. **Samudaya** emphasizes the understanding that desire and attachment perpetuate the cycle of suffering.

3. **The Truth of the End of Suffering (Nirodha):** The Buddha asserted that suffering can be brought to an end by attaining Nirvana/Nibbana. Nirvana represents a state of liberation, a cessation of the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. By transcending desire and achieving enlightenment, one can attain Nirodha, the cessation of suffering.
4. **The Truth of the Path Leading to the End of Suffering (Astangika-Marga):** The Eightfold Path (Astangika-Marga) serves as a practical guide to **alleviate suffering** and **attain enlightenment.** The Eight-Fold Path consists of right understanding, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. By following this path, individuals can cultivate wisdom, ethical conduct, and mental discipline, ultimately leading to the end of suffering.

The Four Noble Truths encapsulate th**e fundamental nature of existence**, providing a framework for understanding the human condition and offering a path toward liberation from suffering. These truths serve as a guide for practitioners to navigate the complexities of life, address the root causes of dissatisfaction, and embark on a transformative journey toward enlightenment.

The Eightfold Path

Buddha emphasized the importance of thorough **study, meditation, contemplation, and deliberate action** to gain a profound understanding of each of the Four Noble Truths. The journey towards peace and happiness, according to him, involves continuous reflection on these truths and a commitment to staying on the transformative path. Interestingly, the Eightfold Path, a key component of this journey, is characterized more by the process of unlearning than **traditional learning**—an endeavor to acquire knowledge with the ultimate goal of shedding misconceptions and revealing one's true nature. This p**ath consists of eight interrelated activities** designed to guide individuals beyond conditioned responses that obscure their authentic selves.

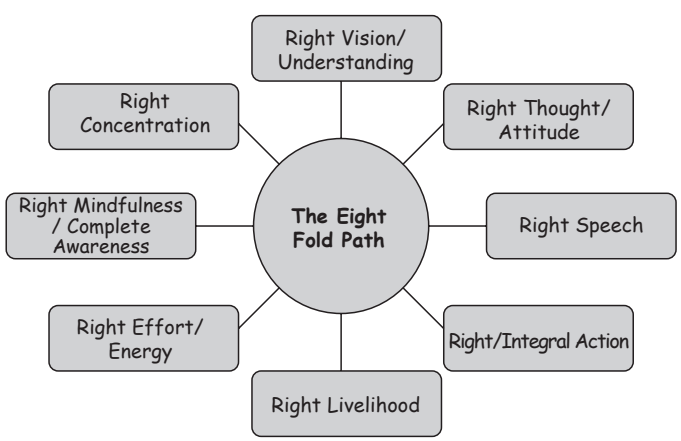


Fig. 5.2: The Eight Fold Path

The Astangika-Marga, or Eight-Fold Path, encompasses the following components:

1. **Right Vision or Understanding (Samma-Ditthi):** This entails gaining a perfect view and understanding of the nature of reality and the transformative path laid out by Buddha.
2. **Right Thought or Attitude (Samma-Sankappa):** It involves cultivating emotional intelligence and acting from a place of love and compassion, fostering a positive mindset.
3. **Right or Whole Speech (Samma-Vaca):** This emphasizes clear, truthful, uplifting, and non-harmful communication, promoting wholesome dialogue and interactions.
4. **Right or Integral Action (Samma-Kammanta):** This signifies an ethical foundation of life, rooted in the principle of non-exploitation of oneself and others. It includes the Five Precepts, which serve as an ethical code governing the behavior of both the monastic order and the laity. The Five Precepts are as follows:
   a. **Do not commit violence:** This precept extends to all living beings, emphasizing the respect for the right to life for every creature.
   b. **Do not covet the property of others:** Beyond simple theft, this precept advocates avoiding taking anything without clear assurance that it is intended for oneself.
   c. **Do not indulge in corrupt practices or sensual behavior:** Covering excessive sensual pleasure or misconduct of a sexual nature, this precept emphasizes self-discipline, replacing celibacy with chastity for the laity.
   d. **Do not speak a lie:** Encompassing avoidance of slander, lying, deceiving, and speech not beneficial to others' welfare, this precept encourages truthful communication.
   e. **Do not use intoxicants:** This precept, in a distinct category, discourages the use of substances causing intoxication and heedlessness, believing that such indulgence may lead to breaking the other four precepts.

Monks and Nuns were supposed to strictly observe three additional precepts.

- **To avoid eating after mid-day:** Monks and nuns were required to observe strict restraint in their dietary habits, abstaining from any food consumption after mid-day. This practice aimed at promoting discipline, self-control, and mindfulness in relation to physical needs.
- **To abstain from dancing, singing, music, and other entertainment, as well as to refrain from using perfumes, ornaments, and other items used to adorn or beautify a person:** This precept emphasized

a renunciation of sensory indulgence and worldly pleasures. Monks and nuns were expected to distance themselves from forms of entertainment, avoid personal adornments, and reject the use of items associated with physical embellishment. The intention was to foster detachment and focus on spiritual pursuits.

- **To abstain from using high or luxurious beds, and from handling gold and silver (including money):** The commitment to simplicity and renunciation was underscored by the requirement to abstain from using opulent bedding and avoiding any contact with gold, silver, or money. By eschewing luxurious possessions and accommodations, monks and nuns embraced a lifestyle centered on humility and detachment from material wealth.

5. **Right Livelihood or Proper Livelihood (Samma-Ajiva):** This principle underscores the importance of earning a livelihood through correct action and ethical practices, guided by the principle of non-exploitation. Buddha envisioned Right Livelihood as the foundation of an ideal society, emphasizing fair and righteous means of sustenance.
6. **Right Effort or Energy/Vitality (Samma-Vayama):** Right Effort involves the conscious direction of life energy toward a transformative path of creative and healing action that fosters wholeness. This practice signifies a deliberate commitment to conscious evolution, utilizing one's vitality for positive and constructive purposes.
7. **Right Mindfulness or Complete/Thorough Awareness (Samma-Sati):** Right Mindfulness involves developing a heightened awareness of oneself and closely observing one's behavior. According to Buddha, self-care involves vigilant self-observation, encapsulated in the teaching, "If you hold yourself dear, watch yourself well." This aspect of the Eight-Fold Path encourages a deep understanding of one's thoughts, actions, and motivations.
8. **Right Concentration or Meditation (Samma-Samadhi):** Right Concentration, or Samma-Samadhi, carries a dual meaning. Firstly, it involves concentration in the sense of fixing the mind on a single object. Secondly, it signifies the establishment of the entire being at various levels or modes of consciousness and awareness. Beyond mere mental focus, Right Concentration encompasses the profound state of enlightenment or Buddhahood, representing a holistic alignment of the mind and being.

Understanding 'Right' in the Eightfold Path

- The path expounded by the Buddha is commonly known as the **Middle Path, r**epresenting a balanced route between **extreme indulgence** and **extreme asceticism.**
- It's crucial to note that the term **'Right'** in the **Eightfold Path** signifies attributes such as 'proper,' 'whole,' 'thorough,' 'integral,' 'complete,' and 'perfect.' This interpretation doesn't imply a binary of 'right' versus 'wrong' but rather emphasizes a comprehensive and holistic approach to spiritual practice.

Pillars of Buddhism

The three pillars of Buddhism are integral to the propagation and continuity of the Buddha's teachings:

- **Buddha (Founder/Teacher): Siddhartha Gautama,** the historical Buddha, is revered as the enlightened one who discovered the path to liberation and compassionately shared it with humanity.
- **Dhamma (Teachings):** The Dhamma encompasses the **philosophical and ethical teachings** of the Buddha, encapsulated in scriptures such as the **Tripitaka.** It serves as a guide for **ethical conduct, mental development, and wisdom.**
- **Sangha (Order of Buddhist Monks/Nuns):** The Sangha represents the **monastic community,** ordained in the teachings of the Buddha. **Monks and nuns**, as torchbearers of the Dhamma, play a crucial role in disseminating the Buddha's doctrine and guiding lay practitioners (**Upasakas**) on the path to enlightenment.

Together, these three pillars form the bedrock of Buddhism, providing a comprehensive framework for spiritual practice and ethical living.

Nibbana/Nirvana

The pinnacle of Buddha's teachings is **Nibbana/Nirvana**, a term derived from **'Ni' (negative particle)** and **'Vana' (craving or lusting). Nibbana** signifies a departure from **craving,** not a physical death but the extinction of desire, attachment, greed, ignorance, hatred, and ego. It is a mental stage beyond all comprehension and desire.

- It is a state of **non-attachment** and **does not imply nothingness or annihilation**. Described as 'unborn, unoriginated, uncreated, and unformed,' Nibbana is eternal, desirable, and characterized by happiness.
- In Nibbana, nothing is **eternalized,** and nothing is **annihilated** except suffering. It is not confined to a specific location or a heavenly realm but is considered a supramundane state attainable in the present life.
- Unlike non-Buddhist concepts of an eternal heaven after death**, Nibbana i**s achievable in the here and now. The Buddhist perspective differentiates Nibbana from an afterlife goal, emphasizing its accessibility within one's current existence.

Phases of Nibbana

- **Sopadisesa nibbana-dhatu:** When Nibbana is experienced in this life with the body intact, it is termed **sopadisesa nibbana-dhatu.**
- **Anupadisesa nibbana-dhatu:** An Arhat's attainment of parinibbana i.e. complete dying out after the dissolution of the body, marks the anupadisesa nibbana-dhatu.

This distinction highlights the nuanced nature of realizing Nibbana, underscoring that its attainment is not limited to a future existence but is within reach even in the present life.

In essence, the Middle Path and the Eight-Fold Path provide a comprehensive framework for practitioners to navigate the complexities of life, leading them toward the ultimate goal of Nibbana/Nirvana.

Some important Features of Buddhism

- **Transmigration and Impermanence:**
  - Buddhism embraces the concepts of transmigration and impermanence, acknowledging the continuous cycle of rebirths and the inherent transitory nature of existence.
  - However, it distinctly rejects the notions of God and soul (atman). According to Buddha, the idea of the soul is a myth, and the Buddhist worldview encompasses diverse realms and beings.
- **The Myth of the Soul:**
  - In Buddhist philosophy, the **soul** is considered a myth, challenging the conventional understanding of a permanent, unchanging self.
  - Instead, **Buddhism** posits the existence of many realms and various beings, allowing for the possibility of rebirth into any of these states. The rejection of a fixed soul aligns with the core Buddhist teachings.
- **The Ten Realms of Being:**
  - Traditionally, Buddhism delineates the existence of ten realms of being, reflecting a hierarchical structure. At the apex is the Buddha, followed by Bodhisattvas (an enlightened being destined to be a Buddha but purposely remaining on earth to teach others), Pratyeka Buddhas (a Buddha on their own), Sravakas (direct disciples of Buddha), heavenly beings (superhuman angels), human beings, Asuras (fighting spirits), beasts, Pretas (hungry ghosts), and depraved individuals (hellish beings).
  - These realms are mutually inherent and inclusive, emphasizing the interconnectedness of all states of being.

Ten Realms of Buddha

1. Buddha
2. Bodhisattva, i.e., an enlightened being destined to be a Buddha, but purposely remaining on earth to teach others
3. PratyekaBuddha, i.e., Buddha on their own
4. Sravaka, i.e., direct disciple of Buddha
5. heavenly beings, i.e., superhuman angels
6. human beings
7. Asura, i.e., fighting spirits
8. Beasts
9. Preta, i.e., hungry ghosts
10. Depraved men, i.e., hellish beings

- **Karma and the Connection between Lives:**
  - The connection between different lives in Buddhism is established through **Karma**. Unlike the ritualistic approach in the **Brahmanical tradition**, Karma in Buddhism is contingent on intention more than the action itself.
  - **Buddhism** places less emphasis on feelings of guilt and highlights the role of the mind. Mental anguish, such as remorse and guilt, is to be avoided to foster a calm and peaceful mind.
  - **The Role of Karma in Rebirth:** Rebirth, according to Buddhism, is governed by the cumulative results of the Karma accumulated in a particular life. The intention behind actions carries more weight than the actions themselves. This perspective underscores the importance of cultivating a positive mental state to influence future rebirths.
- **Ahimsa and Vegetarianism:**
  - While Buddhism advocates non-violence (ahimsa), interestingly, it does not inherently entail vegetarianism.
  - Monks in Buddhism are not forbidden from consuming meat. This departure from the strict vegetarianism associated with ahimsa in other traditions showcases Buddhism's nuanced approach to ethical practices.

In essence, Buddhism's rejection of God and soul, coupled with its intricate cosmological framework, reflects a unique perspective on existence, emphasizing the impermanence of self and the interconnectedness of all beings through the cycle of rebirth.

Maitreya Buddha

Maitreya Buddha is a future Buddha, yet to come to save the world. In all branches of Buddhism, Maitreya Buddha is viewed as the direct successor of Gautam Buddha. As the fifth and final Buddha of the current Kalpa, Maitreya's teachings will be focused on re-establishing the Dharma, a vital concept in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism.

DIFFERENT SCHOOLS OF BUDDHISM

Hinayana (Theravada)

Hinayana, specifically in the form of Theravada Buddhism, encompasses several key aspects:

- **Etymology and Terminology:**
  - "Hinayana" translates to **'the Lesser Vehicle,'** emphasizing a more individualistic approach.
  - "Theravada" signifies the **'Doctrine of the Elders,'** highlighting its adherence to the early teachings of Gautama Buddha.

- **Orthodoxy and Philosophical Foundation:**
  - Theravada is considered the orthodox school of Buddhism, maintaining a closer alignment with Gautama Buddha's original teachings compared to Mahayana.
  - It serves as the foundational school of Buddhist philosophy, emphasizing the preservation of the core doctrines.
- **Preservation of Scriptures:**
  - The scriptures of Theravada are written in Pali, the language directly associated with the oral teachings of Buddha. These scriptures include the **Tripitaka**, the traditional Buddhist canon.
- **View of Buddha and Practices:**
  - Hinayana, particularly in its Theravada form, regards Buddha as a human being, distinguishing itself by refraining from idol worship.
  - Practitioners of Theravada Buddhism pursue individual salvation through rigorous practices involving self-discipline and meditation.
  - The ultimate aim of Hinayana is the achievement of nirvana, representing liberation from the cycle of birth and death.
- **Geographical Presence:**
  - Currently, Theravada Buddhism holds a prominent position in **Sri Lanka**, serving as its principal stronghold.
  - It is also practiced in other regions, including **Myanmar, Thailand**, and various parts of **Southeast Asia**.
  - The historical figure **Ashoka**, a notable ancient Indian emperor, played a significant role as a patron of Hinayana Buddhism, contributing to its dissemination and acceptance.

In summary, Hinayana, specifically embodied by Theravada Buddhism, encompasses a set of distinctive characteristics, including its historical roots, adherence to early teachings, philosophical orientation, scriptural language, and geographical prevalence.

Mahayana

- **Origin:** "Mahayana" translates to '**the Greater Vehicle**.' The terms "Mahayana" and "Hinayana" were introduced by the Mahayana school itself. It is recognized as the heterodox school of Buddhist philosophy and emerged later than the Hinayana.
- **Philosophical Schools:** Mahayana comprises two primary philosophical schools: **the Madhyamika and Yogachara**, each offering unique perspectives on Buddhist philosophy.
- **Scriptures and Language:**
  - The scriptures of Mahayana are composed in **Sanskrit**, aligning with the language of Indian scholasticism.
- **View of Buddha and Practices:**
  - In Mahayana, Buddha is treated as a divine figure, and practitioners engage in the worship of idols representing Buddhas and Bodhisattvas embodying Buddha Nature.
  - Mahayana emphasizes universal liberation from suffering for all beings, signified by the term **'Great Vehicle**.'
  - The ultimate aim of Mahayana is 'spiritual upliftment,' envisioning salvation for individuals and all sentient beings.
  - Mahayana allows salvation through the grace of the **Amitabha Buddha**, achieved by means of faith, devotion, and mindfulness of the Buddha.
  - **Mantras** play a role in Mahayana practices.
- **Geographical Presence:** Presently, Mahayana Buddhism is practiced in countries such as **Japan, China**, and various other Asian regions.
- **Historical Patronage:** The historical figure **Kanishka** played a crucial role in patronizing Mahayana Buddhism, contributing to its establishment and growth. Later, **Harsha Vardhana** also supported Mahayana, further solidifying its influence.

In summary, Mahayana Buddhism distinguishes itself through its philosophical diversity, scriptural language, devotional practices, and the belief in universal liberation. Its historical patronage by influential figures contributed to its dissemination and acceptance in various Asian countries.

Some Important facts about Buddhist scholars

Aryadeva

- Aryadeva, was a Mahayana Buddhist monk, a disciple of Nagarjuna and a Madhyamaka philosopher.

Dignaga

- Dignaga was an Indian Buddhist scholar and one of the Buddhist founders of Indian logic (hetu vidya).
- Dignaga's work laid the groundwork for the development of deductive logic in India and created the first system of Buddhist logic and epistemology (Pramana).

Vajrayana

- **Meaning:**
  - **"Vajrayana"** translates to **'Vehicle of Thunderbolt**.' It is also known as the '**Diamond Vehicle'** and referred to as **Mantrayana**, **Tantrayana**, **Tantric**, or **esoteric** Buddhism.
  - The term **"vajra" symbolizes** the absolutely real and indestructible in a human being, in contrast to the fictions individuals entertain about themselves and their nature. "Yana" signifies the spiritual pursuit of the ultimately valuable and indestructible.
- **Historical Development: Vajrayana Buddhism** emerged in **eastern India** in the **eighth century** and was firmly

established in **Tibet** by the 11th century through a mission sent from the Vajrayana monastery of **Vikramshila**.

- **Two Truths Doctrine:** The central concept of Vajrayana is the **'Two Truths Doctrine**,' providing the philosophical basis for its methods. It distinguishes between **'conventional'** and **'ultimate'** truths. Conventional truth pertains to consensus reality, while ultimate truth reflects reality as perceived by an awakened or enlightened mind.
- **Symbolic Language and Inner Experiences:** Vajrayana texts use a highly symbolic language known as **'samdhya-bhasa**' or **'Twilight Language**' to convey inner experiences. This aims to evoke valuable experiences within followers, attempting to recapture the enlightenment experience of the historical Buddha.
- **Path to Enlightenment:**
  - Vajrayana is considered an esoteric extension of Buddhist thought and practice, presenting itself as a quicker and more effective path to enlightenment.
  - Followers believe in acquiring **magical power**, referred to as **Vajra**, for the attainment of salvation.
  - **Taras:** The tradition emphasizes the role of the Bodhisattva, favoring fierce deities known as the Taras.
  - Vajrayana ritual and devotion involve **mantras** (esoteric verbal formulas), **mandalas** (diagrams and paintings for visualization practices), and various rituals.
  - The guru, a religious teacher mastering the philosophical and ritual tradition, holds a significant role.
- **Geographical Presence:**
  - Vajrayana became popular in eastern India, particularly in **Bengal** and **Bihar.** It is predominant in the **Himalayan** nations of **Tibet**, **Nepal**, **Bhutan**, and **Mongolia**.

In summary, Vajrayana Buddhism distinguishes itself through its unique doctrines, symbolic language, emphasis on inner experiences, and its position as an esoteric and quicker path to enlightenment. Its influence extends across various regions, particularly in the Himalayan belt.

IMPORTANT BUDDHIST WRITERS
Asvaghosha: Renowned as the author of the 'Buddhacharita' in Sanskrit, Asvaghosha was a multifaceted figure during the time of Kanishka. His versatile talents spanned poetry, drama, music, scholarship, and debate.
Nagarjuna: Recognized as the progenitor of the Madhyamaka school within Mahayana Buddhism, Nagarjuna shared a contemporaneous relationship with Gautamiputra, the Satvahana King of Andhra.
Asanga and Vasubandhu: Siblings flourishing in the fourth century CE in the Punjab region, Asanga played a pivotal role as the key teacher in the Yogachara or Vijnanavada school, founded by his mentor Maitreyanatha. Vasubandhu's monumental work, the 'Abhidharmakosa,' remains a significant encyclopedic resource in Buddhism.
Buddhaghosa: A prominent Pali scholar of the fifth century, Buddhaghosa is renowned for his masterpiece, the 'Visuddhimagga' or 'Path of Purification.' This work serves as a comprehensive summary and analysis, encapsulating the Theravada perspective on the Buddha's path to liberation.
Dinnaga: The eminent intellectual figure of the fifth century, Dinnaga is celebrated as the pioneer of Buddhist logic, leaving a lasting impact on the philosophical landscape.
Dharmakirti: Residing in the seventh century AD, Dharmakirti emerged as a formidable Buddhist logician, possessing profound skills in subtle philosophy and dialectics. His contributions enriched Buddhist thought during this period.

BUDDHISM AND BRAHMANISM

Approaches to Varna:

- Buddhism and Brahmanism, two significant religious and philosophical traditions in ancient India, held divergent views on the concept of varna. While the Brahmanas conferred a divine sanction to varna, categorizing people based on their birth, Buddhist monks took a distinctive stance.
- In the **Anguttara Nikaya**, it is explicitly stated that upon joining the **Sangha**, an individual becomes **vevanniyanti**, signifying a liberation from varna-based distinctions.

Inclusivity in the Sangha:

- The Sangha, the monastic community in Buddhism, stood out for its inclusivity. Members from all castes, including prominent Brahmana monks like **Mahakassapa** and **Sariputta**, as well as Kshatriya monks such as **Ananda** and **Aniruddha**, coexisted.
- The Buddha himself, along with monks from diverse backgrounds like **Upali** (a barber) and **Chunda** (a blacksmith), highlighted the Sangha's commitment to transcending traditional caste boundaries.

Reversal of Varna Hierarchy:

- A noteworthy departure from Brahmanical tradition is found in the Pali canon, which reverses the hierarchy of varna, placing the Kshatriya varna above the Brahmana.
- This inversion challenged the conventional social order and underscored Buddhism's intent to redefine societal values.

Limitations on Social Inclusivity:

- Despite its reputation for inclusivity, Buddhism did not advocate for the complete abolition of social differences. Some Buddhist rules aimed at maintaining the status quo and, establishing conditions for entry into the Sangha.
  - Notably, **debtors, slaves, and soldiers** were prohibited from entry without explicit permission from their respective masters, reflecting biases against these social groups.

Shared Emphasis on Social Order:

- Both Brahmanism and Buddhism, while differing in their approach to varna, shared common ground in promoting social order based on classes.

- Both traditions upheld virtues such as fulfilling familial obligations, protecting private property, and respecting political authority. Additionally, neither is directly engaged in production, relying on alms provided by society.

In summary, while Buddhism demonstrated a more inclusive approach compared to Brahmanism, it did not entirely challenge the existing social structure. The Sangha's composition and rules reflected a nuanced perspective, striving for social harmony within the bounds of certain traditional norms.

BUDDHISM AND JAINISM

Buddhism and Jainism share several similarities in their teachings, reflecting common themes in their philosophies. These similarities include:

- **Rejection of Vedic Authority:**
  - Both Buddhism and Jainism reject the authority of the Vedas, distinguishing themselves from the orthodox Brahmanical traditions.

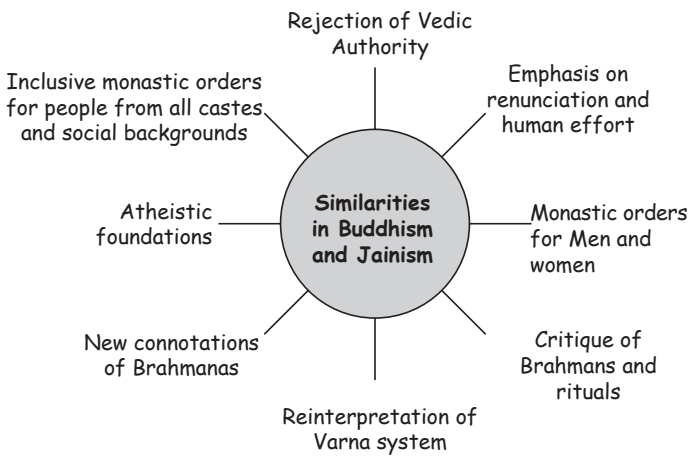

Rejection of Vedic Authority
Emphasis on renunciation and human effort
Monastic orders for Men and women
Critique of Brahmans and rituals
Reinterpretation of Varna system
New connotations of Brahmanas
Atheistic foundations
Inclusive monastic orders for people from all castes and social backgrounds
Similarities in Buddhism and Jainism

Fig. 5.3: Similarities in Buddhism and Jainism

- **Emphasis on Renunciation and Human Effort:** Both religions place a significant emphasis on renunciation and view human effort as a crucial means of attaining salvation or liberation **(moksha)**.
- **Monastic Orders for Men and Women:** Both Buddhism and Jainism establish monastic orders that are open to both men and women. This reflects an inclusive approach to spiritual practice and enlightenment.
- **Atheistic Foundations:** While Jainism recognizes the existence of gods, both Jainism and Buddhism are fundamentally atheistic. Jainism does not accord the gods a central role in the cosmic order, placing them beneath the Jina or the conqueror in importance.
- **Critique of Brahmanas and Rituals:** Similar to Buddhist texts, Jaina texts criticize the Brahmanas for their practice of animal sacrifices and ritual authority. Both traditions challenge the ritualistic practices associated with Brahmanical authority.
- **Reinterpretation of Varna System:** Buddhism and Jainism share the perspective of reinterpreting the traditional varna system. They emphasize the superiority of the **Kshatriya** varna over others, including the Brahmanas. The focus shifts from an ascribed status to an achieved status through virtuous deeds.
- **New Connotation of Brahmana:** Both religions redefine the term **'Brahmana'** to denote a wise individual with true knowledge who lives an exemplary life. The emphasis is on wisdom and virtuous conduct rather than birth-based distinctions.
- **Inclusive Monastic Orders:** Both Jainism and Buddhism maintain inclusive monastic orders, welcoming people from all castes and social backgrounds. This inclusivity is reflected in anecdotes about individuals from diverse backgrounds achieving prominence in these spiritual communities.
- **Representation of Women:** Both religions break traditional barriers by admitting women into their monastic orders. Women mendicants in Jainism are addressed as **aryika** or **sadhvi**, and women played important roles in both religious traditions.

The parallel principles and values shared between Buddhism and Jainism demonstrate their common ground in challenging established norms and advocating for spiritual practices that transcend societal distinctions.

IMPACT AND SPREAD OF BUDDHISM IN ANCIENT INDIA

Buddhism, with its roots in **Magadha**, left an enduring imprint on the history of India, gradually gaining popularity and evolving into a world religion with the support of **Emperor Ashoka.** The spread of Buddhism across various regions can be attributed to several factors.

- **Liberal and Democratic Appeal:**
  - Buddhism's appeal to the common man was grounded in its more liberal and democratic ethos compared to Brahmanism.
  - By challenging the rigid varna system, Buddhism garnered significant support from the lower classes.
  - Its openness to people of all castes, including the admission of women to the Sangha, offered a liberating alternative to those marginalized in the Brahmanical social order.
- **Emancipation from Social Hierarchies:**
  - Conversion to Buddhism held particular significance for those excluded from the traditional Brahmanical practices.
  - Individuals not privileged with sacred threads or access to Vedic knowledge found freedom from marks of inferiority within the Buddhist community.
  - This inclusivity resonated with the non-Vedic people of Magadha, who readily embraced Buddhism as

a departure from the Brahmanas' condescension towards them.

- **Personal Charisma of Buddha:**
  - The personality and rational doctrine of the Buddha played a crucial role in the widespread acceptance of Buddhism.
  - His ability to engage opponents with wit, poise, and calmness under challenging circumstances endeared him to a diverse audience and facilitated the expansion of Buddhist teachings.
- **Language Accessibility:**
  - Unlike Brahmanism, whose texts were in **Sanskrit**, accessible primarily to Brahmanas, the Buddha's teachings were in **Pali**, a language spoken by the common man.
  - This linguistic accessibility contributed significantly to the broader dissemination of Buddhist principles.
- **Monarchical Patronage:**
  - The patronage extended by monarchies, particularly in **Magadha**, **Kosala**, **Kaushambhi**, and various **Gana-Sanghas**, played a pivotal role in popularizing Buddhism.
  - Support from rulers and their subjects provided a conducive environment for the growth and acceptance of the Buddhist faith.
- **Social and Economic Reforms:**
  - Buddhism, recognizing the challenges arising from the changing material life in the sixth century BCE, addressed social and economic disparities.
  - The Buddhists advocated against the accumulation of wealth and the indulgence in cruelty or violence.
  - These progressive ideas resonated with the population, contributing to the appeal and acceptance of Buddhism as a path to a more equitable and compassionate society.

In essence, Buddhism's multifaceted approach, encompassing social inclusivity, linguistic accessibility, and progressive doctrines, facilitated its remarkable spread across different strata of ancient Indian society.

BUDDHIST ARCHITECTURAL DEVELOPMENTS

- **Bodhgaya:**
  - The pre-eminent Buddhist site is, marked by the **Mahabodhi Temple** in Bodhgaya and the significant bodhi tree.
  - The initial shrine at the base of the Bodhi tree is credited to King Ashoka.
  - Many sculptures in the temple's niches date back to the 8th century **Pala Period**.
  - The present Mahabodhi temple is a **colonial-era** reconstruction, reflecting the 7th-century design.
  - The temple's design is unique, not strictly **dravida** or **nagara**, featuring a narrow profile like nagara but rising without curving like dravida.

Fig. 5.4: Mahabodhi Temple, Bodhgaya

- **Nalanda:**
  - Nalanda, a **mahavihara** and monastic university, originated in the 5th century CE with the foundation laid by **Kumargupta I.**
  - The sculptural art at Nalanda, encompassing stucco, stone, and bronze, drew heavily from the Buddhist Gupta art of Sarnath.
  - Initial sculptures depict Mahayana deities, including **standing Buddhas, bodhisattvas like Manjusri Kumara, Avalokiteshvara,** and **Naga-Nagarjuna**.
  - During the late 11th and 12th centuries, Nalanda evolved into a prominent tantric center, featuring Vajrayana deities such as **Vajrasharada** (a form of Saraswati), **Khasarpana**, **Avalokiteshvara**, etc.
  - Crowned Buddha depictions became more common after the 10th century.

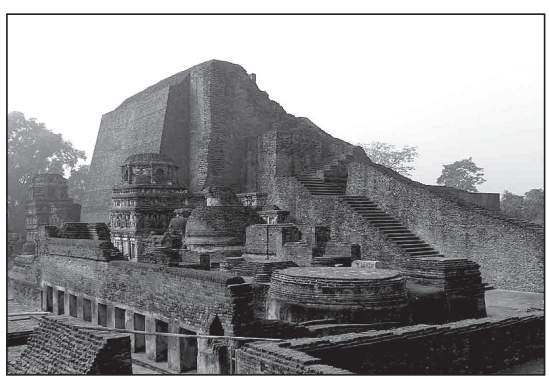


Fig. 5.5: Nalanda University

- **Odisha: Lalitagiri, Vajragiri,** and **Ratnagiri** in Odisha became major Buddhist monasteries.
- **Nagapattinam:** Nagapattinam, a port-town, served as a significant Buddhist center until the Chola Period.
- **Stupa Architecture:**
  - **Sanchi Stupa:** Stupa at Sanchi was built during Ashoka's reign while Torans were added later during Shunga's Rule. Erotic scultpture of a young girl , **Salabhanjika** is carved on one of the Torans.

- **Bharhut Stupa:** It is located at Dewar in Madhya Pradesh and dedicated to Hinayan Buddhism. Images of Yakshas and Yakshinis and various stories are depicted on the walls of the Stupa.

❑ **Ajanta Caves:**

- Ajanta is a series of rock-cut caves in the **Sahyadri ranges (Western Ghats)** on **Waghora river** near Aurangabad in Maharashtra.
- There are a total of **29 caves** (all Buddhist), of which 25 were used as Viharas or residential caves while 4 were used as Chaitya or prayer halls**.**
- The caves were developed in the period between **200 B.C. and 650 A.D**.
- The Ajanta caves were inscribed by the Buddhist monks, under the patronage of the **Vakataka kings** – Harishena being a prominent one.
- Reference to the Ajanta caves can be found in the travel accounts of **Chinese Buddhist travellers Fa Hien** (during the reign of Chandragupta II; 380- 415 CE) and **Hieun Tsang** (during the reign of emperor Harshavardhana; 606 - 647 CE).
- The figures in these caves were done using **fresco painting**.The paintings are generally **themed around Buddhism** – the life of Buddha and Jataka stories. The caves were designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in **1983**.

Fig. 5.6: Ajanta Caves

Key Terms in Buddhism and Their Purposes

Key Terms	Purpose
Chaityas	Prayer halls of monks
Viharas	Monasteries
Pravrajya	A ritual marking an individual's transition from household life to the monastic path, symbolized by the initiation as a novice under the guidance of a preceptor. This ceremony typically includes the act of shaving the head and adopting ochre-colored robes.
Upasampada	The ordination ceremony signifies the transition of a novice into a full-fledged member of the monastic community.
Uposatha	Ceremony held on full moon and new moon.
Parajika	Literally denoting defeat, this concept encompasses four severe transgressions that lead to expulsion from the Sangha. These offenses include engaging in sexual intercourse, taking what is not given, causing harm to another being, and making false claims of spiritual attainment.
Pavarana	Pavarana is a significant Buddhist holy day observed on the full moon day of Aashvin in the lunar month. This day serves as the conclusion of the rainy season, often referred to as 'Buddhist Lent.' During Pavarana, each monk is required to appear before the community of monks (Sangha) to confess and atone for any offenses committed during the Vassa, which is the preceding rainy season.
Upasakas	Male followers who have sought refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha, yet have not undertaken monastic vows.
Upasikas	Female followers who have sought refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha, yet have not undertaken monastic vows.
Bodhisattva	Enlightened beings who have forsaken their own liberation, delaying entry into paradise to assist others in achieving enlightenment. Bodhisattvas dedicate their strength and energy to the salvation of suffering beings in the world. Often depicted adorned with precious jewelry, adorned in elegant garments, and adopting graceful postures, these compassionate deities embody the spirit of altruism and benevolence.
Bhikkhu Sangha	Sangha of Monks
Bhikkhuni Sangha	Sangha of Nuns
Theragatha	Verses of Elder Monks
Therigatha	Verses of Elder Nuns
Shramana/Samana	One who strives to realise the truth.
Shramana/Samana	Wanderer. It means seeker, one who performs acts of austerity, ascetic.

Key Terms	Purpose
Shakra	God Indra
Parivraajaka:	It literally means 'one who roams about all round the place.'
Agraharika	It means one who probably looked after the lands given in charity.
The Sutas and Magadhas	Memorizing of chronicles, dynastic histories or epic tales was the work of a different group of people, who were the descendants of priestly families of the Vedic period.
Paramita	As per Buddhism, there is a path that consists of perfecting certain qualities, which leads the pilgrim to become a Samma Sambuddha (Enlightened Universal Buddha) or Bodhisattva. The qualities are called the Paramis (perfections) in the Southern traditions and the Paramitas in the Eastern and Northern traditions. The Ten Paramitas are- Generosity, Morality, Patience, Energy, Meditation, Wisdom, Skilful means, Resolution, Power, and Knowledge.

REASONS FOR THE DECLINE OF BUDDHISM IN INDIA

The irony of history unfolds as Buddhism, which once flourished in the land of its birth, began to fade away from the early 12th century onwards. This decline can be attributed to various interconnected reasons:

- **Assimilation of Rituals and Dogmas:**
  - Buddhism, initially fueled by a spirit of reform, eventually succumbed to the rituals and dogmas it had vehemently denounced in its early stages.
  - The movement that had set out to challenge Brahmanism found itself adopting some of the very characteristics it had sought to reform. But later, huge donations and patronage increased impurity in the Buddhism and became a major reason behind its decline.

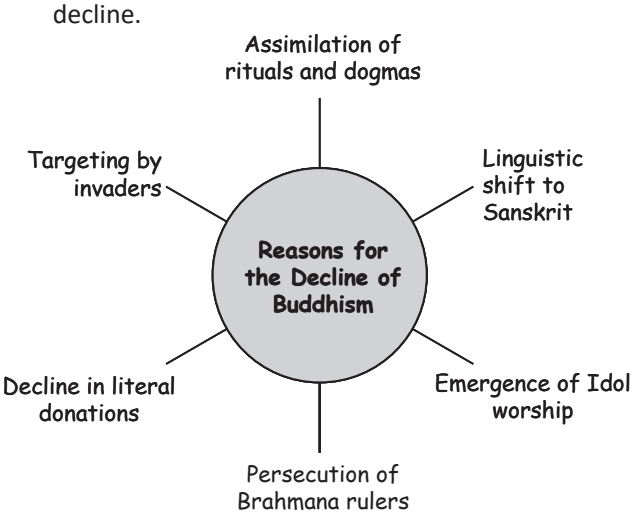

Assimilation of rituals and dogmas
Linguistic shift to Sanskrit
Emergence of Idol worship
Persecution of Brahmana rulers
Decline in literal donations
Targeting by invaders
Reasons for the Decline of Buddhism

Fig. 5.7: Reasons for the Decline of Buddhism

- **Linguistic Shift to Sanskrit:** A notable shift in language contributed to the erosion of Buddhism. The monks abandoned Pali, the language of the people, in favor of Sanskrit, a language associated with a select group of intellectuals. This linguistic transition created a disconnect between Buddhism and the masses it had once aimed to reach.
- **Emergence of Idol Worship:**
  - From the first century CE onwards, a significant departure occurred as Buddhism started to engage in large-scale idol worship.
  - The acceptance of numerous offerings from devotees led to the corruption of the ascetic life of Buddhist monks.
  - This departure from the original teachings marked a turning point in the practice of Buddhism.
- **Persecution by Brahmana Rulers:**
  - Brahmana rulers, such as **Pushyamitra Shunga** and the **Huna King Mihirakula**, played a pivotal role in the decline of Buddhism. They orchestrated large-scale persecutions against Buddhists.
  - The rise of Shaivite rulers like **Shashank** of **Gauda**, a worshipper of Shiva, further intensified the challenges faced by Buddhists.
- **Decline in Liberal Donations:**

The liberal donations that had once sustained Buddhist monasteries began to decline. The dwindling support from rulers and devotees contributed to the economic challenges faced by Buddhist institutions, affecting their ability to thrive.

- **Targeting by Invaders:**

Rich monasteries became vulnerable targets for invaders, including the Turkish and other forces. The plundering of these monastic centers added to the woes faced by Buddhism, contributing to its decline.

The decline of Buddhism in India is a complex narrative involving internal transformations, external persecutions, and the erosion of core principles. The movement that had once challenged the status quo found itself entangled in the very practices it sought to reform, leading to its gradual disappearance from its land of origin.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

What factors contributed to the decline of Buddhism in India while flourishing in distant regions like Japan, Korea, and others?

CONCLUSION

Buddhism critically engaged with the varna system, advocating for a shift from birth-based hierarchy to one based on individual merit and virtue. It challenges ritualistic practices, critiques Brahmanas, and emphasizes the importance of wisdom and virtuous living. The inclusive nature of their monastic orders, welcoming individuals from diverse social backgrounds, underscores their commitment to breaking down societal barriers. In essence, the legacies of Buddhism endure as profound contributions to the spiritual and philosophical heritage of humanity. Their teachings continue to inspire seekers on the path to enlightenment, emphasizing compassion, ethical conduct, and the pursuit of inner transformation. As timeless reflections on the nature of existence, suffering, and liberation, Buddhism and Jainism exemplify the rich intellectual and spiritual traditions that have shaped the cultural landscape of India and beyond.

Jainism and Ajivikas

6

The word **Jaina means follower of a jina**, which means victor, a person who has attained infinite knowledge and teaches others how to attain moksha, i.e., liberation from the cycle of rebirth. Tirthankara is another word for Jina and means 'ford builder,' i.e., one who builds fords that help people across the ocean of suffering. The Jaina conception of time consists of an endless sequence of half-cycles called **utsarpinis** and **avasarpinis** (respectively progressive and regressive in terms of degrees of happiness), lasting vast periods, and further divided into six stages known as **kalas**.

There are supposed to be **24 tirthankaras** in each half-cycle of time. In our current half-cycle, which is an **avasarpini, i.e., a period of regressive happiness**, the **first Tirthankara was Rishabhadeva**. The historicity of all the Tirthankaras is not easy to ascertain. **Neminatha, the 22nd one**, may have belonged to the Saurashtra region of Gujarat. The **23rd was Parshvanatha**, who lived in Benaras. **Vardhamana was the 24th Tirthankara** and came to be known as **Mahavira (great hero)**. All the jinas are supposed to have taught the same doctrine.

EARLY TEXTS AND LITERATURE AS FOUNDATIONS OF JAINISM

Early Jaina literature represents a foundational aspect of Jainism, an ancient Indian religious tradition. Emerging from an oral tradition, the tenets of Jainism were initially transmitted through dedicated adherence to the **five cardinal vows,** with monks playing a central role. Recognizing the challenges posed by the oral transmission of knowledge, Jain scholars eventually transitioned to a written form, culminating in the compilation of the Jaina canon during a historic council in Vallabhi, Gujarat.

This canonical corpus includes the **Angas, Upangas, Prakirnas, Cheda Sutras, Mula Sutras,** and individual texts, showcasing the diverse dimensions of Jaina philosophy, ethics, and rituals. The early Jaina literature also played a pivotal role in the development of **two major sects** within Jainism: the **Digambara and Shvetambara**, each with distinct canons.

Beyond the canonical scriptures, non-canonical Jaina works, composed in languages like **Prakrit, Sanskrit, Apabhramsha, and Kannada,** provide a broader understanding of Jainism's cultural and historical context. Despite the wealth of knowledge encapsulated in early Jaina literature, it has received relatively less scholarly attention compared to other religious traditions, making it an area ripe for exploration and further investigation.

Important Aspects of Jain Literature

- **Oral Transmission in Early Jainism:** Tenets of Jainism were initially transmitted orally. Monks adhered rigorously to the **five cardinal vows, i.e., Ahimsa, Satya, Asteya, Aparigraha, and Brahmacharya** during antiquity. Religious scriptures were considered possessions, discouraging documentation.
- **Transition to Written Form:** Decision made to document knowledge in Jaina literature. The traditional term 'canon' is deemed inadequate, implying a static corpus. Sacred scriptures, denoted as Siddhanta or Agama, are composed in the **Ardh-Magadhi dialect**.
- **Council in Vallabhi, Gujarat:** Compilation of Jaina canon believed to occur in the 5th or 6th century CE, chaired by **Devarddhi Kshamashramana in Vallabhi, Gujarat.** Foundational texts such as Acharanga Sutra, Sutrakritanga, and Kalpasutra are acknowledged.
- **Split in Jainism:** Jainism underwent a schism around the 3rd century CE. The emergence of two major sects: Digambara ('Sky-clad' or naked) and Shvetambara ('Clad in White').
- **Compilation of Angas by Ganadharas:** Immediate disciples of Lord Mahavira are known as **Ganadharas**. Possessed **perfect knowledge (keval-gyan)**. Orally compiled direct teachings of Lord Mahavira into 12 primary texts called Angas. These texts are known as **Angas (limbs or main texts)** and are the oldest religious scriptures and the backbone of Jaina literature.
- **Role of Srut-kevlis:** Monastics with knowledge of a minimum of ten Purvas are known as Srut-kevlis. They composed numerous texts (sutras) expanding on Angas content, collectively known as **Angbahyas**.
- **Shvetambara Canonical Corpus: 12 Angas** (main texts), **12 Upangas** (scriptures providing a further elucidation of the Angas), **10 Prakirnas** (scriptures delineating independent or miscellaneous aspects of Jaina religious subjects), **Six Cheda Sutras** (pertaining exclusively to the conduct and behaviour of monks and nuns, addressing repentance for sins and mistakes), **Four Mula Sutras** (essential scriptures for initial stages of monkhood), Various individual texts like **Nandi Sutra and Anuyogadvara.**
- **Digambara Canonical Distinction:** Digambaras assert the loss of original Angas over centuries. Adhere to a distinct canon known as Siddhanta. **Tattvartha-Sutra** encapsulates fundamental Jaina tenets, with variations between sects.

- **Jaina Beliefs on Jina Teachings:** Each Jina imparts the same fundamental truths tailored to societal needs and eras. Upon attaining omniscience, Jina emits divya-dhvani (divine sound). There are divergent interpretations between Digambara and Shvetambara sects.
- **Nature of Divine Sound:** Digambaras characterize it as an unarticulated, monotone sound akin to 'OM.'Shvetambaras deem it 'divine' as audible to all beings, including animals with comprehension. Described as a human language in Ardha-Magadhi Prakrit.
- **Non-Canonical Jaina Works:** Commentaries on canonical scriptures exhibit linguistic diversity. It was partly composed in Prakrit dialects like Maharashtri, and partly in Sanskrit. Jaina Puranas (Charitas for Shvetambaras) detail the lives of Jaina saints/Tirthankaras.
- **Significant Jaina Puranas: Adi Purana** (9th century): Narrates life of Jaina founder Rishabha (Adinatha). **Harivamsha Purana** (8th century): Offers Jaina perspective on Krishna, Balarama, Pandavas, and Kauravas. **Trishashtilakshana Mahapurana** (9th century): Encompasses life stories, and discussions on diverse topics.
- **Hemachandra's Parishishtaparvan (12th century):** Provides detailed insights into political history. Constitutes the earliest account of Jaina teachers.
- **Diversity in Jaina Texts:** The corpus includes lyrical poetry, hymns, and didactic stories (katha). Composed in various languages such as Prakrit, Sanskrit, Apabhramsha, and Kannada.
- **Understudied Nature of Jaina Texts:** Jaina texts offer insights into cultural history, Jainism's history and doctrines, rival schools, and Sangha life. Unfortunately, Jaina texts have not received extensive scholarly attention compared to their Buddhist counterparts. Despite their potential to illuminate Jainism and ancient societal dynamics, scholarly inquiry remains limited.

Sthanakavasi:

- It is a sect of Svetambara Jainism.
- It is founded by a merchant named Lavaji in 1653 AD.
- The Sthanakavasi do not believe in idol worship.
- They believe that idol worship is not essential in the path of soul purification and attainment of Nirvana/ Moksha.

Causes for the Rise of Jainism

Varna Hierarchy:

- Society was divided into four varnas: Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, and Sudras.
- Each varna had specific functions, based on birth, with privileges for the higher varnas.
- Brahmanas claimed the highest status, demanding gifts and exemptions.
- Brahmanas, as priests and teachers, enjoyed privileges like exemption from taxation. Kshatriyas governed and fought, living on taxes from peasants. Vaisyas engaged in agriculture and they were the principal contributors.
- Sudras meant to serve higher varnas, and were barred from Vedic studies and were depicted as domestic, agricultural slaves, craftsmen, and laborers. Varied descriptions, including being called cruel and thieving.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

How can the lessons from Jainism's canonical transition inform contemporary efforts in preserving and disseminating indigenous knowledge?

Religious Unrest in 6th Century B.C.:

- Primary cause for the rise of Jainism and Buddhism.
- Rejecting complex rituals and sacrifices from the Later Vedic period.
- Common people found sacrificial ceremonies expensive and confusing due to superstitious beliefs and mantras.
- Upanishadic teachings, were highly philosophical and not easily understood.

Iron Age and Agricultural Changes:

- Large-scale habitations began with the use of iron tools around 600 B.C.
- Iron tools facilitated agriculture and settlements, but Vedic cattle sacrifice hindered progress.
- Rise of cities in north-eastern India, marked by the use of punch-marked coins.

Need for Simple and Intelligible Salvation:

- People sought a simpler, shorter, and more understandable path to salvation.
- Buddha and Mahavira provided teachings that fulfilled this need.
- Emphasis on delivering religious teachings in a language known to the people.

Reaction against Material Changes:

- Strong reaction against private property, new dwellings, luxury, and violence.
- Social inequalities and suffering resulted from the new forms of property.
- Common people yearned for a return to ascetic ideals, rejecting material advantages.
- Buddhism and Jainism preferred simple, ascetic living. Monks were to reject material possessions and live minimally. Rebellion against material advantages from the changing lifestyle in the Gangetic basin.

Social and Economic Factors:

- Rigid caste system causing tensions in society.

- ❑ Higher classes enjoyed privileges that were denied to lower classes.
- ❑ Resentment among Kshatriyas towards the dominance of the priestly class.
- ❑ Buddha and Mahavira, both Kshatriyas, emerged in this social context.
- ❑ Growth of trade improving economic conditions for Vaisyas.
- ❑ Desire for enhanced social status by the Vaisyas, hindered by the orthodox Varna system.
- ❑ Vaisyas began supporting Buddhism and Jainism as a means to challenge the existing social order.
- ❑ Merchant class played a significant role in extending support to these new religions.

JOURNEY TO LIBERATION: THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF VARDHAMANA MAHAVIRA

Vardhamana Mahavir is recognized as the **24th and final Tirthankara or Jina**, denoting a victor who has attained boundless knowledge and is capable of guiding others towards liberation from the cycle of rebirth, known as **'Moksha'**. Renamed Mahavira, signifying a great hero, he was also acknowledged by titles such as **Jitendriya**, reflecting his mastery over inner desires, and **Arihant**, signifying his worthiness. His attributes included possessing **avadhijnana**, which denotes an exceptional level of insight and cognition beyond the ordinary,i.e., superhuman or psychic power.

By tradition, Mahavira, considered a contemporary of the Buddha, was born in 540 BCE (Some say in 599 BCE) **in the village of Kundagrama, situated near Vaishali, the capital of Videha**. Similar to the Buddha, he hailed from a **Kshatriya clan,** with his father Siddhartha serving as the chief of the **Jnatjriya clan,** and his mother Trishala being the **sister of Lichchavi's King Chetaka**. The familial ties extended to the royal family of Magadha, as Chetaka's daughter was married to Bimbisara of the Haryanka Dynasty in Magadha.

Initially leading a household life, Mahavira married Yashoda and had a daughter named Priyadarshana (also called Anojja). However, at the age of 30, he renounced worldly pursuits in pursuit of truth and adopted an ascetic lifestyle. For 12 years, he wandered, engaging in rigorous austerities, fasting, and meditation. It is believed that at the age of 42, on the **banks of the Rijupalika river** near the town of **Jrimbhikagrama**, and in the fields owned by the householder Samaga, Mahavira achieved **kevalajnana**, signifying omniscience or infinite knowledge.

Mahavira passed away and attained **siddha, or complete liberation,** at the age of 72, circa 468 BCE (Some say in 527 BCE), in Pavapuri near Patna.

Fig. 6.1: Vardhman Mahavira

PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS: DOCTRINES OF JAINISM

Core Tenets of Jaina Doctrine:

- ❑ **Triratna:** Three gems.
- ❑ **Pancha Mahavrata:** Five great vows.
- ❑ **Anekantavada:** Doctrine of manifold nature of reality.
- ❑ **Syadavada:** Theory of conditioned predication.
- ❑ **Nayavada:** Theory of partial standpoints.
- ❑ **Ahimsa:** Doctrine of non-violence.

The **First Tirthankara, Rishabhadeva,** identified by the **symbol of a bull** and referenced in the Rig Veda and Vayu Purana, pertains to the current avasarpini half cycle, denoting a period of regressive happiness. Establishing the historical authenticity of all Tirthankaras poses a challenge. **Neminatha**, associated with Saurashtra in Gujarat, is regarded as the **22nd Tirthankara**, while the **23rd is believed to be Parshvanatha** from Benaras, characterized by the emblem of a snake. The **24th Tirthankara**, Mahavira, identified by the **emblem of a lion,** concludes the list.

UNIVERSAL LAW:

- ❑ The **Jain philosophy** holds that the world is created and maintained by **Universal Law.**
- ❑ Jainism does not support in a creator deity.
- ❑ According to the Jain doctrine, the universe and its constituents(soul, matter, space, time, and motion) have always existed.
- ❑ All the constituents and actions are governed by universal natural laws.

Some important aspects of Jain Doctrine:

- ❑ The surest way of annihilating Karma is to practice penance.
- ❑ Every object, even the smallest particle has a soul.
- ❑ Karma is the bane of the soul and must be ended.

Theory of Anekantavada

- It opposes the philosophy of **ekanta** (one-sidedness or solitary attribute).
- It means 'non-onesidedness,' 'manifoldness,' or 'non-absolutism.'
- It encourages acceptance of **relativism and pluralism.**
- It perceives truth and reality differently from various points of view.
- It rejects the idea of a single, complete truth.
- It compares attempts to proclaim absolute truth with **adhgajanyayah** (the analogy of the blind men and the elephant).
- It states that objects have infinite modes of existence and qualities, so they cannot be completely grasped in all aspects and manifestations by finite human perception.
- Only the Kevalins, the omniscient beings, can comprehend objects in all aspects and manifestations, while all others are capable of only partial knowledge.

Theory of Syadvada

- This is the Doctrine of 'maybe' which emphasizes the relativity of all knowledge.
- According to this doctrine, all the judgments are conditional and valid only under specific conditions, circumstances, or senses.
- It recognizes that only partially true statements about reality are possible.
- It requires every statement about reality to be prefixed with **'syat'** (meaning 'maybe').

Theory of Nayavada

- Signifies describing reality from different points of view.
- **'Naya'** refers to partially true statements.
- These statements lack absolute validity.
- Represents a particular opinion framed with a viewpoint, which does not exclude other viewpoints.
- Expresses a partial truth about an object as perceived by a knowing agent.

Kaivalya

- Kaivalya, also known as Kevala Jnana, signifies omniscience in Jainism and is approximately translated as complete understanding or supreme wisdom.
- Kevala Jnana is considered an inherent quality of all souls, though it is obscured by karmic particles enveloping the soul.
- Each soul possesses the potential to attain omniscience by shedding these karmic particles.
- Jain scriptures describe twelve stages through which the soul progresses to achieve this ultimate goal.

Kevalins and Finite Perception

- **Kevalins**, omniscient beings, can comprehend objects in all aspects and manifestations.
- Finite human perception is limited, and objects have infinite modes of existence and qualities.
- The story of the blind men and the elephant illustrates the limitations of narrow perspectives in grasping the complete truth.

Triratna in Jaina Ethics

- Triratna, or the three jewels, is essential for achieving the **liberation of the soul in Jainism**. It consists of **Right Faith** (Samyag Darshana), **Right Knowledge** (Samyag Jnana) and **Right Conduct** (Samyag Charitra).

More About 'Triratnas'

Right Faith (Samyag Darshana)

- It involves perceiving things accurately.
- It not only focuses only on mere acceptance of beliefs but seeing, hearing, and feeling things properly.
- It encourages avoiding preconceptions and superstitions that hinder clear perception.

Right Knowledge (Samyag Jnana)

- It requires accurate and comprehensive knowledge of the real universe.
- It involves understanding the five (or six) substances and the nine truths of the universe.
- It emphasizes possessing this knowledge with the right mental attitude.

Right Conduct (Samyag Charitra)

- It involves living in accordance with Jaina's ethical principles.
- It encourages adherence to rules that prevent harm to living beings.
- It urges the liberation from attachment and the elimination of impure attitudes and thoughts.

To achieve the realization of Triratna, individuals are required to adhere to the **Pancha Mahavrata** or the **Five Great Vows:**

Non-violence (Ahimsa)

- Among these five vows, non-violence (ahimsa) is the cardinal principle of Jainism, and hence it is known as the cornerstone of Jainism.
- It emphasizes the equality of all living beings, prohibiting harm to animals, insects, and plants.
- It recognizes four forms of existence, i.e., Gods(deva) humans (manushya), hell beings (naraki), animals and plants (tiryancha), and lay followers, should avoid harming beings with two or more senses.
- Monks extend this to refrain from harming even ekendriyas and element bodies.
- Strict vegetarianism is advocated in Jainism and the intention to harm, the absence of compassion, unawareness and ignorance are considered to make an action violent.

- Non-violence extends to action, speech, and thought, with an emphasis on avoiding approval or encouragement of violent activities.

Truth (Satya)

- It advocates refraining from falsehood and consistently speaking **wholesome and pleasant truths.**
- It suggests silence if the truth may cause pain, hurt, anger, or death.
- It identifies anger, greed, fear, and jokes as breeding grounds for untruth.
- Moral courage is required for truthful expression in speech, mind, and deed. Only those who have conquered greed, fear, anger, jealousy, ego, and frivolity can speak the truth.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

Given the cardinal principle of non-violence (Ahimsa) in Jainism, how can the philosophy of Ahimsa be integrated into contemporary initiatives in India to address social issues such as communal harmony and animal rights?

Non-stealing (Achaurya or Asteya)

- It defines stealing as taking another's property without consent or through unjust means.
- One should observe this, take vows very strictly, and not touch even a worthless thing, which does not belong to him.
- It limits acceptance of alms, help, or aid to the minimum requirement to avoid theft.
- To take more than one's need is also considered theft in Jainism.

Celibacy/Chastity (Brahmacharya, added by Mahavira)

- It involves total abstinence from sensual pleasure and the pleasure of all five senses.
- It recognizes sensual pleasure as an infatuating force that jeopardizes virtues.
- It requires monks to strictly observe celibacy, refraining from both physical indulgence and thoughts of sensual pleasures.
- Household rules stipulate limited physical relationships within the bounds of marriage.

Non-attachment/Non-possession (Aparigraha)

- It advocates detachment from worldly objects to break the cycle of birth and death.
- It believes attachment to possessions leads to sin and unhappiness.
- It warns that worldly wealth fosters greed, jealousy, selfishness, ego, and violence.
- Mahavira emphasized that wants and desires are endless, and true spiritual liberation requires limiting attachment to material possessions.

It is important to acknowledge that when these vows, known as **vratas**, are observed with utmost stringency, they are referred to as **'Mahavratas**,' **signifying great or complete vows.** Typically, these are intended for ascetics who lead a monastic lifestyle. Laypersons, due to their varied circumstances, cannot adhere to these vows with the same level of strictness. Therefore, they are permitted to practice them to the extent feasible within their conditions. When these vows are followed to a lesser degree, they are **termed 'Anuvratas,' indicating small or partial vows.** The highest form of death aspired to by an individual, whether a monk or a layperson, involves the culmination of life through the practice of meditation and fasting.

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN BUDDHISM AND JAINISM

- They both reject the authority of Vedas.
- They both emphasize renunciation and human effort for salvation.
- They establish monastic orders for men and women.
- They are fundamentally atheistic, recognizing gods but assigning them lower importance compared to their central figures (Buddhism to Buddha, Jainism to Jina).
- They criticize Brahmanas, their rituals, and animal sacrifices, prioritizing ritual authority over Brahmanas.
- They both emphasize the superiority of the Kshatriya varna over other varnas, redefining 'Brahmana' to denote wisdom and an exemplary life achieved through good deeds.
- They allow people from all castes and social backgrounds to join their monastic orders.
- Both Buddhism and Jainism welcome women as mendicants (Jainism refers to them as aryika or sadhvi).
- In Jainism, individuals from lower castes, like Harikeshiya from a Chandala family, were prominent in the monastic order.
- Representatives of the Brahmana varna in Jainism include Bhadrabahu, Divakara, Jinasena, and Haribhadra.

SPREAD AND INFLUENCE OF JAINISM

Jainism gradually extended its influence to western India, particularly in regions where the Brahmanical religion had limited strength.

- **Use of Prakrit Language:** The early followers of Jainism strategically utilized the **Prakrit language**, spoken by the

common people, to disseminate their doctrines, forsaking the use of Sanskrit, which was predominantly favored by the Brahmanas. This linguistic choice significantly contributed to the broadening of Jainism's follower base.

- **Royal Patronage:** It was supported by influential monarchs, including Chandragupta Maurya, who not only patronized Jainism but also embraced asceticism himself in his later years in Karnataka; the faith gained popularity in southern India.
- **Expansion in South:** The expansion of Jainism in southern India was further catalyzed by a severe famine in Magadha approximately two centuries after Mahavira's demise. Lasting around 12 years, the famine prompted many Jain followers, led by **Bhadrabahu** (later known as Digambaras), to migrate southward as a protective measure, thereby spreading Jainism in the region.
- **Spread to Kalinga and other Regions:** By the 4th century BCE, Jainism had also reached **Kalinga, experiencing significant promotion under the rule of King Kharavela.**

Subsequently, in the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE, the faith reached the southern districts of Tamil Nadu. Over time, Jainism made inroads into Malwa, Gujarat, and Rajasthan.

Patrons of Jainism	
South India	**North India**
❑ Kadamba dynasty	❑ Bimbisara
❑ Ganga dynasty	❑ Ajatasatru
❑ Amoghavarsha	❑ Chandragupta Maurya
❑ Kumarapala (Chalukya dynasty)	❑ Bindusara
	❑ Harshavardhana
	❑ Ama
	❑ Kharavela

Remarkably, despite not garnering as much state patronage as Buddhism and not spreading as rapidly in its early years, Jainism has persisted in numerous regions of the Indian subcontinent. This is in stark contrast to Buddhism, which has virtually disappeared from its land of origin.

DIFFERENT SCHOOLS OF JAINISM

Aspect	Digambara	Shvetambara
Literal Meaning	**'Sky clad'**	**'White clad'**
Tradition during Magadha Famine	Migrated south under Bhadrabahu's leadership.	Stayed back in Magadha under Sthulabahu's leadership; accused of violating rules by the returning migrants.
Liberation of Women	Believe women lack the necessary body and will for moksha; must be reborn as men.	Acknowledge the possibility of women attaining Jina-hood in the present lifetime; support spiritual accomplishments by women
Example of Tirthankara	19th Tirthankara is not accepted as female; identified as Mallinatha, a male who later became a Tirthankara	19th Tirthankara is a female named Malli, the only female Tirthankara in the tradition
Mahavira	Rejects Shvetambara claims on Mahavira's embryo	Mahavira born to Kshatriya lady Trishala, with embryo altered by God Indra at the 83rd day after conception
Marriage of Mahavira	Mahavira never married; renounced while parents were alive	Mahavira married Princess Yashoda, had a daughter, and renounced after his parents' death
Idols of Tirthankaras	Nude, unadorned, with downcast eyes	Wearing a loin-cloth, adorned with jewels, with glass eyes inserted in the marble
Canonical Literature	Digambaras hold that original and genuine texts were lost and reject the achievements of the first council which met under the leadership of Acharya Sthulabhadra and consequently the recasting of the angas.	Believe in the validity and sacredness of existing canonical literature (12 angas and sutras)
Term for Hagiographies	Use the term **'Purana'**	Use the term **'Charita'**
Food of Ascetics	Take food standing, with knotted upturned palms, in one house only	Collect food from different houses
Possessions of Ascetics	Renounce all possessions, including clothes, and allow only, Rajoharana (a small peacock-feather broom for brushing insects away) and Kamandalu (a wooden water-pot for toilet hygiene).	Allowed fourteen possessions including loin-cloth, shoulder-cloth, etc.

JAINA ARCHITECTURE

Jains, similar to Hindus, exhibited a prolific inclination for constructing temples, scattering religious shrines and pilgrimage destinations throughout the region. The **state of Bihar** holds significance as the location of some of the earliest Jain pilgrimage sites.

Fig. 6.2: Ellora Cave number 30

Notably, **Ellora and Aihole in the Deccan region** stand out as crucial Jain architectural landmarks. The Jain cave architecture, spread across various locations in the Indian subcontinent, marked the conclusion of the cave-building era. While determining the precise inception of Jain cave construction poses challenges, it is generally acknowledged to have occurred between the 6th and 12th centuries AD.

- **Artistic Craftsmanship:** These caves, adorned with intricately carved illustrations portraying Jain Pantheon Tirthankara stories, showcase the pinnacle of artistic craftsmanship. Certain Jain caves, exemplified by those in Ellora, Maharashtra, and Sittanavasal, Tamil Nadu, boast elaborately painted ceilings.

Fig. 6.3: Sculptures at Mangi Tungi Cave

- **Notable Examples:** Among the distinct forms of Jain architecture are **Layana/Gumphas**, commonly referred to as caves. Some notable examples include the Ellora Caves (Cave No. 30-34) in Maharashtra, Mangi Tungi Cave in Maharashtra, Gajpantha Cave in Maharashtra, Udayagiri-Khandagiri Caves in Odisha, Hathi-gumpha Cave in Odisha, and Sittanavasal Cave in Tamil Nadu.

JAINA COUNCILS

Council	Year	Place	Achievement	President
1	310 BCE	Patliputra	Compilation of 12 angas to replace Purvas, (Rejected by Digambaras)	Sthulabhadra
2	453 or 466 or 512 CE	Vallabhi(Gujarat)	Final compilation of 12 angas and 12 upangas	Derridhiganj or Devaradhi Kshama Ramana

Table 6.1: Concepts and Meanings

Key Term/ Concept	Meaning/Purpose
a) Basadis	Jaina monastic establishment
b) Avadhijnana	Superhuman cognition
c) Ganadharas	Chief disciples of Mahavira
d) Siddha	Fully liberated
e) Dravya	Substance
f) Guna	Quality
g) Paryaya	Mode
h) Jiva	Soul
i) Eva	In fact
j) Pudgala	Aggregates of atoms with form, color, taste, smell; touchable and feelable
k) Chaitanya	Consciousness
l) Virya	Energy
m) Mohaniya	Delusion-causing karmas
n) Asarva	Flow
o) Nirjara	Wearing out

Key Term/ Concept	Meaning/Purpose
p) Gunasthanas	Stages of purification
q) Arhat	One who has entered the stage of kevalajnana
r) Tirthankara	Arhat who has already acquired the capability of teaching the doctrine

CONTRIBUTION OF JAINISM

- **Challenging Vedic Norms:** Jainism played a pivotal role in challenging the inequities of the varna system and the ritual-centric Vedic religion, marking a significant departure from prevailing societal norms.
- **Language Shift:** Embracing Prakrit as a means of communication, the early Jain followers rejected Sanskrit for their teachings. The religious literature of Jainism was composed in Ardhamagadhi, with its compilation taking place in the 6th century AD at Valabhi in Gujarat.
- **Linguistic Influence:** The linguistic influence of Jainism extended to the development of Marathi from Suraseni

Prakrit, and Jain scholars contributed to the earliest significant works in Apabrahmsa while also formulating its initial grammar.

- **Artistic Practices:** The Jain community played a key role in shaping artistic practices, particularly in the creation and veneration of statues depicting Mahavira, showcasing diverse artistic schools.
- **Contribution to Art and Architecture:** Jainism's impact on art and architecture during medieval times is noteworthy, exemplified by the construction of colossal statues of Bahubali, such as Gomatesvara in Sravanabelogola, Karkal, and Mysore.
- **Monumental Statues:** These impressive structures, hewn from granite by Chamundaraya, a minister of a Ganga ruler named Rachamalla, stand as enduring testaments to Jainism's cultural and artistic contributions.

Ajivikas

Buddhism and Jainism were not the sole religious movements challenging Brahmanical dominance during their historical period. According to Buddhist sources, more than 62 sects and philosophical traditions thrived concurrently. Among these, the Ajivikas, also known as the **'Followers of the way of life**,' constituted an **ascetic order** that emerged during the time of Buddha and Mahavira, persisting until the 14th century. It is one of the schools under **Nastika philosophy or heterodox schools of Indian Philosophy**. (It does not believe in the authority of Vedas.)

- **Founder and Origin:** The **founder of Ajivika**, **Makkhali Gosala**, established the sect, gaining popularity in Magadha during the **third century BCE**.
- **Royal Patronage:** Mauryan kings reportedly donated numerous caves in honor of Ajivika monks.
  - The **Barabar Caves in Bihar**, dating back to the Mauryan Empire, are the most ancient rock-cut caves in India, created specifically for the purpose of providing retreat and meditation spaces for followers of the Ajivika and Jain traditions.

According to tradition, **Gosala** initially shared a period of hardship with Mahavira for approximately **six years.** However, a disagreement between them led to Gosala departing from Mahavira's company and **founding the Ajivika sect,** characterized by pre-determinism or **'Niyati.'** Information about Gosala's doctrines and those of his followers is primarily derived from Buddhist and Jaina sources. These sources suggest that Gosala, considered lowborn, passed away following a dispute with Mahavira shortly before the Buddha's death.

- **Doctrine:** The Ajivikas adhered to **rigid fatalism and determinism**, asserting that a cosmic force called **Niyati** governed all events in the universe, including individual destinies, with meticulous precision. This cosmic force hindered personal efforts to alter or hasten spiritual progress.
  - According to Ajivika's beliefs, karma was deemed fallacious, and attaining Nirvana required enduring an extensive series of lives, unfolding automatically like the unwinding of a ball of thread.
  - The final life was envisioned as that of an Ajivika monk.
  - Consequently, due to their static and melancholic perspective on the human condition, the Ajivikas are inclined towards practicing austerities rather than pursuing purposeful goals.

Some later adherents even worshipped Gosala as a divinity, and the concept of niyati evolved into the doctrine that perceived all change as illusory and posited that everything remained eternally immobile.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

In a world where the Ajivikas believed everything is preordained and unalterable, what implications does this have on our concepts of morality, responsibility, and the pursuit of personal goals?

OTHER HETRODOX SECTS

1. **Pakudha Katyayana:** An early proponent of the **Hindu Vaisheshika School**, espoused the idea that sorrow, happiness, and life, much like the indestructible elements of earth, water, air, and light, are enduring aspects of existence.
2. **Purana Kassapa:** He laid the groundwork for **Samkhya Philosophy** by asserting that virtuous conduct has no impact on an individual's karma.
3. **Ajita Keshakambalin**: An advocate of complete materialism, propagated **Uchchedavada**, or annihilationism. This doctrine later gave rise to the Lokayata or Charvaka School.
4. **Sanjaya Balattipura**: A skeptic, rejected the possibility of attaining certain knowledge altogether.

CONCLUSION

Jainism stands as a profound and enduring spiritual tradition that emerged in response to the religious, social, and economic dynamics of ancient India. Jainism's emphasis on universal compassion, environmental consciousness, and the pursuit of enlightenment continues to resonate through the centuries. As a living testament to the enduring quest for spiritual truth, Jainism holds a unique place in the rich tapestry of India's cultural and religious heritage, inspiring individuals to lead lives of virtue, compassion, and ethical awareness.

Characterized by a deterministic worldview, the Ajivikas believed in the cosmic force of niyati governing all aspects of existence, denying the efficacy of personal effort and karma. Despite its brief prominence and influence, the sect eventually faded into obscurity, leaving behind a legacy of fatalism and ascetic practices.

Mauryan Empire (324 - 187 BCE)

7

The rise of the Mauryan Empire marked a watershed moment in the chronicles of Indian history, heralding an era of unprecedented political unity and clarity in historical documentation. Emerging in 321 BCE under the leadership of **Chandragupta Maurya**, this empire not only transformed the Indian subcontinent into a vast, centralized realm but also laid the groundwork for a systematic recording of its history.

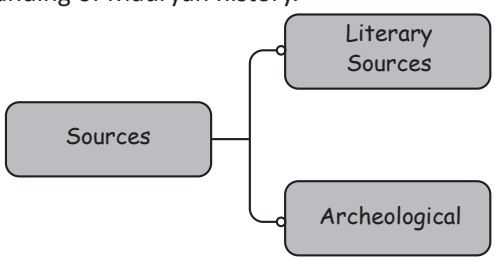
Before the advent of the Mauryan Empire, the Indian subcontinent was characterized by a patchwork of numerous small states and kingdoms, each vying for supremacy. Chandragupta Maurya's military acumen, guided by the strategic brilliance of Chanakya, led to the unification of these disparate territories under a single imperial banner. This marked the first instance of political unity in the vast and diverse landscape of ancient India.

The Mauryan era not only witnessed the consolidation of political power but also brought about a remarkable clarity in historical recording. The meticulous chronicles of this period, facilitated by the emergence of the Arthashastra and other literary works, laid the foundation for systematic history writing. The clarity in chronology and the reliability of sources became defining features of Mauryan historical records, setting a standard for subsequent historical documentation in the subcontinent.

DIVERSE SOURCES OF HISTORY OF MAURYAS

A distinctive feature of the Mauryan Empire's historical legacy is the wealth of sources available for researchers and historians. The period boasts an abundance of indigenous and foreign literary works, each providing unique insights into the socio-political fabric of the time.

In addition to textual sources, epigraphical records such as inscriptions on pillars and rocks, including the renowned **edicts of Ashoka**, contribute significantly to our understanding of Mauryan history.



Literary Sources

1. Arthashastra:

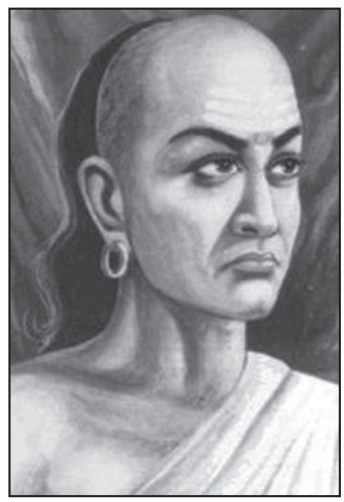


Fig. 7.1: Kautilya

- Among ancient Indian literature, the Arthashastra stands as a beacon of sophisticated wisdom and detailed insight into the art and science of governance. The Sanskrit title itself, translating to **'the science of material well-being,' or alternatively, 'the science of statecraft,'** encapsulates the essence of this seminal work.
- Attributed to Chanakya, the chief minister of **Chandragupta Maurya**, the Arthashastra is celebrated as one of the most comprehensive treatises on political thought in Indian history.
- For centuries, the Arthashastra remained elusive until its rediscovery in India around **1905 CE** by **R. Shamashastry.** Preserved on palm leaves, the edition is dated to approximately 250 CE, centuries after Kautilya's time. Despite the temporal gap, scholars widely accept that the core ideas in the treatise are largely reflective of Kautilya's political acumen. It provided the following information:
  - **Content and Scope:** The Arthashastra is a compendium of practical advice for rulers, covering an array of topics essential for **effective governance. Diplomacy and warfare** take center stage, with meticulous discussions on **military tactics, espionage, and treaty negotiations**. Beyond the realms of geopolitics, the treatise also offers insights into law, **taxation, agriculture, mining, fortifications, coinage, manufacturing, trade, administration**, and the intricate world of espionage.
  - **Artha, Dharma, and Kama:** The Arthashastra positions **'artha**,' or material well-being, as paramount—surpassing both **'dharma'** (spiritual well-being) and **'kama'** (sensual pleasure). This prioritization underscores the pragmatic approach

embedded in Kautilya's political philosophy. The treatise is organized into **15 books or Adhikaranas**, with the first five addressing **'tantra'** (internal administration), the next eight delving into **'avapa'** (interstate relations), and the final two encompassing various miscellaneous topics. In 6th Adhikarans , there is discussion of 7 natures or organs of the state i.e. 'Saptang' principle and Mandal principle.

Comparison to Machiavelli:

Often likened to the Italian Renaissance thinker Niccolò Machiavelli, author of "The Prince," Chanakya's pragmatic and unsentimental approach to politics resonates throughout the Arthashastra. It navigates the intricacies of governance, diplomacy, and warfare with a level of detail and sophistication that has few parallels in ancient literature.

- **Practical and Unsparing Ideals:** Kautilya's ideas, as expressed in the Arthashastra, are notably practical and **unsentimental**. The treatise candidly addresses controversial subjects, including assassinations, the strategic management of secret agents, and the tactical violation of treaties. Yet, amidst these realpolitik considerations, Kautilya also emphasizes the **moral duty of the king.** The ruler, he contends, should embody **paternal despotism**, with the happiness and welfare of the subjects serving as the true measure of a king's success.

The Arthashastra emerges not merely as a historical artefact but as a living testament to the complexities of governance in ancient India. Chanakya's enduring legacy, encapsulated within this timeless treatise, transcends the boundaries of time, offering contemporary readers profound insights into the intricacies of statecraft and the eternal balance between power and responsibility.

2. Megasthenes's Indica:

- Within the chronicles of historical intercultural exchanges, Megasthenes's "Indica" bears witness to the wonder and fascination that engulfed the Greek world upon first seeing the glorious beauty of the Indian subcontinent.
- Though incorporated into the writings of later historians such as **Diodorus, Strabo, Pliny, and Arrian, Megasthenes's** observations—sent by **Seleucus Nikator** as an ambassador to the court of Chandragupta Maurya—provide an engrossing mosaic of Mauryan India.

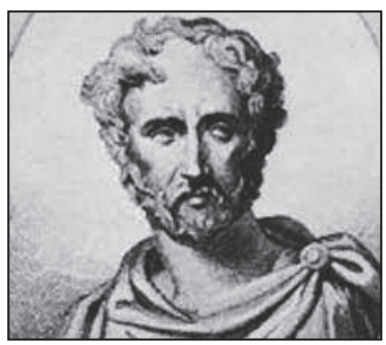


Fig. 7.2: Megasthenes

Mistakes and Idealization: While Megasthenes's work is invaluable, it is not without its faults. Mistakes in details, uncritical acceptance of Indian folklore, and an inclination to idealize Indian culture through the lens of Greek philosophy are evident. For instance, influenced by Herodotus, Megasthenes identified seven castes in India, deviating from the traditional fourfold division of the caste system. Despite these errors, he did recognize two crucial aspects of the Indian caste system: **endogamy** and **hereditary occupation.**

- 'Indica' is a lost treasure, surviving only in fragments scattered across the writings of later historians. Megasthenes, entranced by the grandeur of **Pataliputra**, the **Mauryan capital,** meticulously detailed the subcontinent. His account encompasses the size and shape of India, its soil, climate, rivers, flora, fauna (with special emphasis on elephants, horses, and monkeys), agricultural produce, administrative structure, societal fabric, legendary tales, and folklore. It provides the following information:
- **Greek Perceptions and Indian Worship**: Greeks, captivated by the mystique of Indian culture, referred to **Lord Krishna as Dionysus and Herakles/Hercules** in their own pantheon. Megasthenes portrayed **Indians as paragons of honesty,** extolling their character and moral values. The Greeks were particularly impressed by the Indians' reverence for Lord Krishna, reflecting a cross-cultural synthesis of religious ideas.
- **Contentment and Prosperity:** Megasthenes marveled at the contentment and prosperity of the Indian people. He expressed astonishment that famine had never visited India and that, even in times of war, Indians refrained from ravaging cultivated soil. Instead, battles were fought away from agricultural fields, allowing the uninterrupted cultivation of the land. This contrasted sharply with the practices of other nations during wartime.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

Relate Megasthenes's observations of cultural synthesis in Mauryan India to the dynamics of cultural exchange in today's globalized world. How can understanding cultural nuances contribute to successful international relations for India?

In the intricate history of cultural exchange, Megasthenes's "Indica" weaves a narrative that transcends temporal and geographical boundaries, providing a glimpse into the vibrant mosaic of Mauryan India through the fascinated eyes of a Greek ambassador.

3. Other Literary Sources:

- **Hemachandra's Parishishtaparvan:** Hemachandra's work establishes Chandragupta Maurya's connections

with Jainism, offering a religious and cultural perspective on the Mauryan ruler's life. It adds a layer of complexity to our understanding of the diverse religious landscape within the empire.

- **Vishakhadatta's Mudrarakshasa:** Vishakhadatta's historical drama, Mudrarakshasa, provides a theatrical narrative of Chanakya's strategic machinations against Chandragupta's enemies. Though dramatized, it contributes to the literary tapestry that weaves together the political intrigue and challenges faced by the Mauryan administration.
- **Buddhist Texts:** The trinity of Buddhist texts—**Mahavamsa, Milindapanho, and Mahabhashya**—provides a Buddhist perspective on **Chandragupta Maurya's life**. Additionally, texts like **Dipavamsa, Ashokavadana, and Divyavadana** offer detailed accounts of **Ashoka**, the third Mauryan ruler, shedding light on his conversion to Buddhism and his edicts.
- **Vamsatthapakasini:** This 10th-century commentary on the legend of **Chanakya and Chandragupta** adds layers of interpretation to the historical narrative, showcasing the enduring impact of Mauryan history on later generations.
- **Mamulanar's Reference:** Mamulanar's reference to the southward expansion of the Mauryas in Tamil poetry provides a regional perspective, indicating the Mauryan influence on the political dynamics of the southern part of the subcontinent.

The intricate web of these literary sources provides a nuanced and multifaceted understanding of the Mauryan Empire, its rulers, and the socio-political dynamics that shaped ancient India. Together, these texts weave a rich fabric, allowing us to navigate the corridors of time and glean insights into the foundations of one of India's most illustrious empires.

Archeological Sources

- **Identification through Northern Black Polished Ware:** The archaeological chronicle of the Mauryan era is often anchored by the distinctive Northern Black Polished Ware, a ceramic style indicative of this historical epoch. This pottery form serves as a temporal marker, aiding archaeologists in pinpointing the age of the Mauryan Empire.
- **Urban Discoveries at Kaushambi and Kumrahar:** Two key archaeological sites, **Kaushambi and Kumrahar** near **Patna**, have proven to be pivotal in unraveling the urban fabric of Mauryan society. Unearthed constructions at these sites provide a vivid portrait of a thriving urban culture, with Kaushambi revealing an imposing defense system that speaks to the strategic planning characteristic of Mauryan settlements.
  - **Palatial Remnants at Kumrahar:** Kumrahar, in particular, offers a glimpse into the potential grandeur of the Mauryan capital. Believed to be the palace of Chandragupta Maurya, the site reveals a pillared hall with a wooden superstructure, that tragically collapsed due to a conflagration. The **ashy deposit** left behind provides a poignant archaeological snapshot of the palace's demise.
- **Drainage Systems: A Testament to Hygiene and Health:** The meticulous drainage systems discovered in various locations underscore the importance placed on health and hygiene in Mauryan society. These systems, a testament to advanced urban planning, illuminate the pragmatic approach the Mauryas took toward ensuring the well-being of their populace.
- **Artifacts, Weapons, and Decorations:** The recovery of a diverse array of artifacts, weapons, and decorations has been instrumental in painting a multifaceted picture of Mauryan life and cultural identity. These archaeological finds enrich our understanding of the material culture, craftsmanship, and aesthetic sensibilities prevalent during the Mauryan period.
- **Numismatic Sources:** The advent of urban settlements and increased trade ushered in an era of monetary transactions in ancient India around the sixth century BC. Excavated punch-marked coins bear witness to the integral role of monetary trade within the Mauryan economy and society.
  - **Coinage Variety:** The Mauryan monetary system witnessed the circulation of various coins, with the silver pana and its submultiples taking precedence, followed by the copper mashaka and its submultiples. The Arthashastra alludes to the less prevalent copper currency, **kakani**. These coins, adorned with diverse motifs such as the **Sun, trees, the moon, and animals,** provide tangible glimpses into the economic landscape of the Mauryan Empire.

Fig. 7.3: Mauryan Coins

- **Inscriptions and Edicts:** The inscriptions of Ashoka stand as paramount archaeological sources, surviving relatively undamaged and offering an authentic testament to the existence of the Mauryan dynasty. These inscriptions, scattered across the Indian subcontinent, serve as the

Fig. 7.4: Ashokan Edict

primary confirmation of the Maurya dynasty's historical footprint.

- **Geographical Extent of Ashoka's Edicts:** Ashoka's inscriptions, except for certain areas in the deep south, were strategically erected throughout the Indian subcontinent, reflecting the expansive reach of the Mauryan Empire under his reign. Recent discoveries in **Afghanistan**, tentatively linked to Ashoka, hint at the potential east-west expanse of his kingdom.

THE MAURYAN DYNASTY

Chandragupta Maurya, the architect of the Mauryan dynasty, inherited a formidable army from the **Nandas**, leveraging it to conquer extensive territories across northern, northwestern, and a significant portion of peninsular India. The origins and caste affiliations of the Maurya family remain shrouded in ambiguity, with varying accounts in different texts.

- **Caste and Lineage:** Accounts regarding the caste and lineage of the Mauryas diverge markedly across historical texts. Buddhist sources such as the **Digha Nikaya, Mahavamsa, and Divyavadana** assert that the Mauryas were linked to a branch of the **Kshatriya Moriya** clan associated with the **Shakyas**. This association, perhaps, was intended to elevate the family's social status.
  - In contrast, Brahmanical sources categorize them as **Shudras** and heretics, possibly due to their patronage of heterodox sects during their rule.

Chandragupta Maurya (324/321 – 297 BCE)

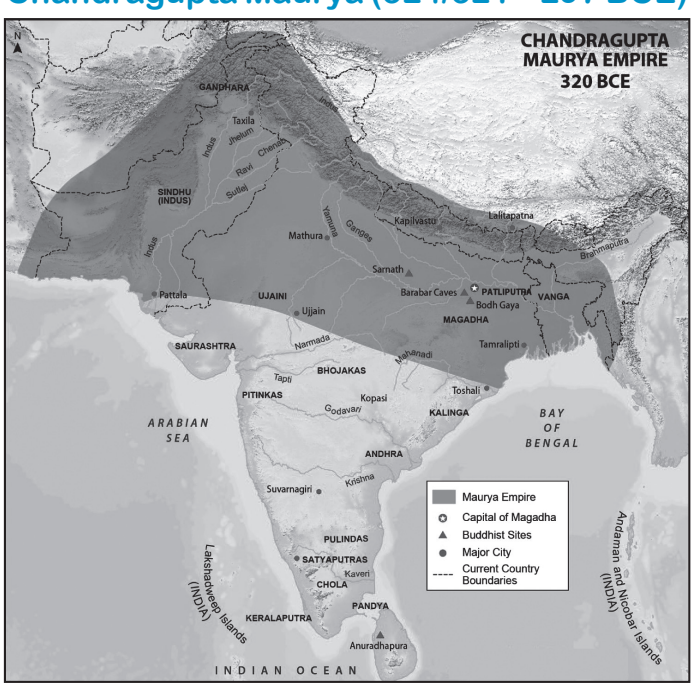


Fig. 7.5: Chandragupta Maurya's Empire

Chandragupta Maurya, a figure of historical significance, embarked on the formidable task of establishing the Mauryan dynasty, relying on the sagacious counsel of his mentor Chanakya, also known as Kautilya. His early life remains veiled in ambiguity, with Brahmanical tradition suggesting Sudra lineage while a Buddhist tradition hints at potential Kshatriya connections in the Gorakhpur region. His role and contribution:

- **Strategic Expansion and Moral Lessons:** The strategic acumen of Chandragupta manifested in a westward movement, establishing control over Punjab and progressively advancing to dominate the Magadha region. This calculated maneuver, as legend has it, was inspired by a moral lesson observed by Chandragupta—a mother scolding her child for choosing the hotter center of a dish, metaphorically guiding his expansion strategy.
- **Encounters with Greeks and Seleucus:** The Greeks referred to Chandragupta as **Sandrocottus**, acknowledging his interactions with **Alexander** and later recounting a clash with **Seleucus Nikator**, a successor to Alexander.
  - This conflict in **301 BCE** culminated in Chandragupta's victory, compelling Seleucus to relinquish territories including **Arachosia, Gedrosia, and Parapomisada**i in exchange for **500 elephants**.
- **Construction of a Vast Empire:** Chandragupta's legacy lies in his role as the chief architect of the expansive Mauryan Empire. Stretching across **Bihar, Nepal, Western and Northwestern India**, and extending into the **Deccan**, the empire epitomized his prowess in statecraft, strategic governance, and territorial consolidation.
- **Jainism and Legacy:** In a remarkable twist, Jain texts and tradition assert that Chandragupta, after the zenith of his political career, embraced Jainism. Alongside **Bhadrabahu**, he retreated to the hills of **Shravana Belagola** near **Mysore**, choosing the path of **Sallekhana**—death by slow starvation—a testament to his profound commitment to spiritual pursuits.

While discrepancies exist in historical accounts regarding Chandragupta's lineage and the nature of his encounters with Greeks, the convergence of sources underscores his pivotal role in shaping the Mauryan Empire. In the last years of Chandragupta Maurya's rule, there was a severe famine in Magdha for 12 years, which is confirmed by Jain texts. The Mahasathan inscription of Chandragupta Maurya also throws light on the arrangements to deal with famine. The amalgamation of brahmanical and Buddhist traditions, Greek accounts, and Jain texts collectively paints a nuanced portrait of Chandragupta Maurya—a visionary leader whose legacy reverberates through the annals of ancient Indian history.

Buddhist Sources and Ajivika Prophecies:

Surprisingly, Buddhist sources remain silent on Bindusara, but narratives from the Ajivika sect illuminate a prophecy. According to Ajivika stories, a fortune-teller prophesied to Bindusara about the future greatness of his son, Ashoka, foreshadowing the transformative reign that would follow.

Bindusara (297 – 273 BCE)

Bindusara, the illustrious successor to Chandragupta Maurya, earned the moniker '**Amitrochates**' from Greek writers, signifying the '**destroyer of foes**.' Mahabhasya refers to him as '**Amitraghat**', emphasizing his prowess in defeating enemies on the battlefield. The Greeks, captivated by his military might, recognized Bindusara as a formidable ruler. His role and contribution:

- **Conquests and Territorial Expansion:** Bindusara's military campaigns expanded the Mauryan Empire significantly. He conquered the vast expanse known as **'the land between the two seas,'** encompassing the Arabian Sea to the west and the Bay of Bengal to the east.
  - The Tibetan monk **Taranatha**, in his 17th-century history of Indian Buddhism, credits Bindusara's minister Chanakya with subjugating **16 towns** and making the king the master of the territory between the eastern and western seas.
- **Diplomatic Engagements with Western Kings:** Greek sources shed light on Bindusara's diplomatic acumen, showcasing relations with western kings. **Strabo** reports that **Antiochus**, the Syrian king, dispatched **Deimachus** as an ambassador to Bindusara's court. Similarly, **Pliny** notes that **King Ptolemy II Philadelphus of Egypt** sent **Dionysius** as an ambassador to India during Bindusara's reign, highlighting the international significance of the Mauryan Empire.
- **Ashoka's Early Mention and Quelling Rebellion:** During Bindusara's reign, the **Divyavadana** mentions his son **Ashoka**. In this historical narrative, Ashoka emerges as a central figure, quelling a rebellion against wicked ministers at Taxila. This early glimpse into Ashoka's character foreshadows the transformative era that would unfold under his rule.
- **Religious Affiliation with Ajivika Sect:** Bindusara is believed to have joined the Ajivika sect, aligning himself with their philosophical and religious tenets. This affiliation adds a layer of complexity to his rule, showcasing a blend of military strength and spiritual inclinations.

Under Bindusara's rule, the Mauryan Empire reached its zenith, exerting suzerainty over almost the entire subcontinent, extending as far south as Karnataka. The breadth of Mauryan influence during Bindusara's reign underscores the empire's dominance across diverse regions of ancient India.

Ajivika Sect

The term "Ajivika" denotes "those following special rules with regard to livelihood". Followers are adherents of a philosophy centered on predetermined livelihood rules, often associated with religious mendicants. Rooted in the Sanskrit and Pali texts, Ajivika philosophy emphasizes "no free will" and complete niyati, shaping a belief that simple living serves as a path to true livelihood rather than salvation. The name encompasses a school of Indian philosophy wherein a predetermined way of life is pursued for its intrinsic value, detached from soteriological motivations for the afterlife. Ajivika philosophy uniquely focuses on the present, viewing existence as predetermined and guided by inner order.

Ashoka (268 – 232 BCE)

Following Bindusara's death in 273 BCE, a succession conflict unfolded over four years. Divyavadana recounts Bindusara's preference for his son Susima, while Ashoka gained support from Bindusara's ministers. With the assistance of Minister Radhagupta and a tumultuous event involving the demise of 99 brothers, Ashoka secured the Magadha throne, culminating in his formal consecration. His role and contribution:

- **Administrative Appointments and Viceroyalties:** During Bindusara's rule, Ashoka was appointed the viceroy of Taxila and Ujjain, two cities pivotal in commercial activities. This experience laid the foundation for Ashoka's future administrative and strategic acumen.
- **Titles and Personal Life:** Ashoka, often regarded as one of the greatest kings in history, held various titles, including **Buddhashakya, Ashoka, DharmAshoka, Devanampiya, and Piyadassi**. According to the Buddhist text **Ashokavadana**, his mother was **Subhadrangi**, the daughter of a Brahmana named **Chandragupta**. His name **"Ashoka," meaning 'without sorrow,'** originated from his mother's exclamation upon his birth.
  - Buddhist texts such as the Dipavamsa and Mahavamsa provide insights into Ashoka's queens. His love marriage with **Mahadevi**, the daughter of a **Vidisha** merchant, resulted in the birth of **Mahendra and Sanghamitra**—key figures in the propagation of Buddhism. Other queens mentioned include **Asandhimitta, Padmavati, Tissarakhita, and Karuvaki**.
- **Extent of the Mauryan Empire:** Under Ashoka's rule, the Mauryan Empire reached unprecedented heights, covering the entire territory from **Hindukush to Bengal**, including **Afghanistan, Baluchistan,** and the Indian subcontinent, except for a small area in the far south. Ashoka's empire surpassed previous boundaries, marking a significant milestone in ancient Indian history.

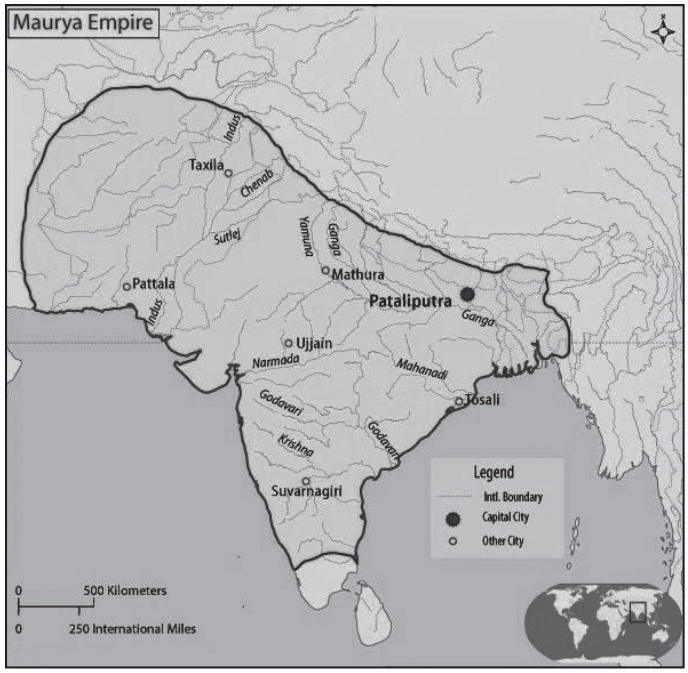


Fig. 7.6: Ashokan Empire

- **Hellenistic Contemporaries and Diplomacy:** Ashoka's reign coincided with that of Hellenistic rulers such as **Antiochus II, Ptolemy II, Antigonus, Magas, and Alexander**. His edicts mention diplomatic exchanges with these rulers, highlighting Ashoka's engagement on the international stage.
- **Conversion to Buddhism and Missionary Activities:** Ashoka, a fervent proponent of Buddhism, is said to have been converted to the faith by his nephew **Nigrodha** or, according to **Divyavadana**, by the monk Samudra. His commitment to Buddhism extended beyond India, as he sent his children Mahendra and Sanghamitra as missionaries to **Ceylon (Sri Lanka).**
- **Dharmic Initiatives and Buddhist Councils:** Ashoka appointed **Dhamma Mahamattas** to propagate dharma among various social groups, including women. He organized the third Buddhist council at Pataliputra, sending missionaries to **Ceylon and Suvarnabhumi**. During his second **Dharmayatra**, he visited **Lumbini**, the birthplace of **Buddha**.
- **Humanitarian Initiatives:** Ashoka implemented significant humanitarian reforms, banning animal sacrifice, regulating animal slaughter for food, and establishing dharmashalas, hospitals, and sarais throughout the kingdom.

Ashoka's reign stands as a transformative era, marked by expansive rule, religious propagation, and enduring contributions to social welfare and ethical governance.

Impact of the Kalinga War on Ashoka's Ideology

Ashoka, guided by Buddhist principles, waged the Kalinga War after ascending the throne. The conflict resulted in significant casualties, with Ashoka citing the deaths of 100,000 individuals and the deportation of 150,000. The suffering inflicted upon Brahmana priests and Buddhist monks deeply affected Ashoka, leading to remorse and a reevaluation of his approach to governance. His change of ideology can be studied as:

- **Cultural Conquest over Physical Occupation:** Moved by the anguish caused by the Kalinga War, Ashoka shifted from a policy of physical occupation **('bherighosha')** to one of cultural conquest **('dhammaghosha')**. The **13th Major Rock Edict** highlights Ashoka's earnest commitment to practicing, desiring, and teaching Dhamma after the annexation of Kalinga.
- **Remorse and Compassion:** Ashoka's remorse stemmed from the realization that conquest brought grievous consequences, causing violence, death, and separation for the conquered people, irrespective of their religious or social affiliations. The **Devanampiya, i.e.,** beloved of the Gods, acknowledged the weight of such suffering on his conscience and prioritized the victory of Dhamma over military triumph.
- **Shift to Ideological Conquest:** Post-Kalinga, Ashoka abandoned the pursuit of foreign dominions through military conquest, embracing ideological conquest. He sought to expand his influence through welfare measures for people and animals in foreign lands, marking a departure from traditional militaristic approaches.
  - The Kandhar inscription attests to the success of Ashoka's policy with certain tribal communities, such as hunters and fishermen, who abandoned animal killing and potentially transitioned to settled agricultural lifestyles under the influence of dharma.
  - Ashoka's response to the Kalinga War marked a profound ideological shift, emphasizing compassion, dharma, and cultural conquest as instruments of governance and empire-building.
- **Ambassadors of Peace and Missionary Initiatives:** As part of his ideological outreach, Ashoka sent ambassadors of peace to the Greek kingdoms in **Western Asia and Greece**. Additionally, relying on Buddhist tradition, he is believed to have dispatched missionaries to propagate Buddhism in Sri Lanka and Central Asia.
- **Practical Consolidation of Empire:** Contrary to assuming extreme pacifism, Ashoka's policy was one of practical consolidation. While advocating for dharma and righteousness, he retained control over Kalinga and incorporated it into his empire. As evidenced by inscriptions, he did not disband the existing army and employed rajukas within the empire to maintain order through both rewards and punishments.

Ashokan Inscriptions and Ashoka's Dhamma

The historical narrative of Ashoka is primarily drawn from his inscriptions, offering insights into both his reign and the comprehensive nature of his policies. These documents, totaling 33 in number, are categorized into Major Rock Edicts, Minor Rock Edicts, Separate Rock Edicts, Major Pillar Edicts, and Minor Pillar Edicts. The earlier edicts, such as Minor and Major Rock Edicts, were strategically placed in public settlements for widespread visibility. In contrast, the later pillar edicts, displaying great technological expertise, were confined to the Ganges plain. Notably, these inscriptions were carved in **Brahmi, Kharosthi, Prakrit, Aramaic, and Greek languages.** These can be studied as:

- **Multilingual and Philosophical Nuances:** Ashoka's inscriptions showcase linguistic diversity, employing various languages like Brahmi, Kharosthi, Prakrit, Aramaic, and Greek. The absence of references to Buddha's teachings in the Greek and Aramaic versions is intriguing.
  - Concepts in these edicts draw from philosophical discourses, with the Aramaic edicts reflecting **Zoroastrian ideas.** While lacking certain key Buddhist concepts, like the Eight-Fold Path, Four Noble Truths, and Nibbana, Ashoka's dhamma-focused inscriptions distinctly embody a Buddhist core ideology.

Features of Ashoka's Dhamma

The main features of Asoka's Dhamma as mentioned in his various edicts, may be summed up as follows:

1. Service to father and mother, practice of ahimsa, love of truth, reverence for teachers and good treatment of relatives.
2. Prohibition of animal sacrifices and festive gatherings and avoiding expensive and meaningless ceremonies and rituals.
3. Efficient organization of administration in the direction of social welfare and maintenance of constant contact with people through the system of Dhammayatras.
4. Humane treatment of servants by masters and prisoners by government officials.
5. Consideration and non-violence towards animals, courtesy to relations and liberality towards Brahmins.
6. Tolerance among all the religious sects.
7. Conquest through Dhamma instead of through war.

- **Ashoka's Dhamma:** A significant portion of Ashoka's inscriptions revolves around dhamma, reflecting a Prakrit interpretation of universal law, righteousness, and social order. Rooted in Buddhist principles, Ashoka's dhamma extends beyond narrow sectarian beliefs.
  - It encompasses a broad ethical code influencing social life, emphasizing non-violence, mutual respect, and understanding among individuals of diverse sects and beliefs.
  - Ashoka's vision of dhamma is not merely piety derived from formal religious beliefs but an adherence to a broader social ethic. It urges ethical behavior, respect for human dignity, compassion, charity, truthfulness, purity, and gentleness.
- **Transformative Policies and Socio-Ethical Code:** After embracing Buddhism post the Kalinga war, Ashoka ardently promoted the faith. He generously supported Buddhists, funded pilgrimages, and convened councils. Missionaries were dispatched to convert regions like South India and Sri Lanka. Ashoka's paternal kingship urged officials to view subjects as children. He appointed officials for dharma propagation and justice administration, disapproving of rituals and animal slaughter.
  - His teachings stressed **compassion, proper conduct, and societal order** through tolerance, independent of sectarian faith. Ashoka's dhamma emphasized ethical conduct, respect, compassion, and tolerance for all, transcending religious boundaries, fostering a holistic societal well-being approach.

Ashoka's inscriptions collectively present a nuanced and comprehensive view of his reign, policies, and the profound impact of his dhamma on diverse aspects of social life.

Fourteen Major Rock Edicts and their Corresponding Messages

Ashokan Edicts can be found throughout the Indian Subcontinent in the form of cave inscriptions, rock edicts, and pillar edicts. James Princep deciphered these edicts in the year 1837. A small number of the edicts describe Ashoka's acceptance of Buddhism, but the majority of them are essentially his pronouncements to the populace.

Edict Number	Content
First	❑ Prohibition of animal sacrifice
Second	❑ Promotion of medical treatment, cultivation of medicinal herbs, roots, fruits and well-digging.
Third	❑ Emphasis on duties of Pradeshikas, Rajukas, and Yuktas; advocacy of touring for inspection, preaching dhamma, and a liberal attitude towards **Brahmanas and Shramanas.**
Fourth	❑ Transformation from **Bheri Ghosha to Dhamma Ghosha;** replacement of war drum with the sound of dhamma.
Fifth	❑ Introduction of Dhamma Mahamattas for spreading dhamma.
Sixth	❑ Mention of administrative entities: **Mantri Parishad, Pulisani, and Pativedakas.**

Seventh	❑ Advocacy of **religious tolerance** among all sects; promotion of welfare measures in the kingdom and neighboring realms.
Eighth	❑ Shift from royal pleasure tours to dhamma tours; personal visit of King Ashoka to **Sambodhi at Bodhgaya.**
Ninth	❑ Critique of ceremonies; stress on the importance of dhamma and moral conduct
Tenth	❑ Declaration of the king's desire for no more fame or glory.
Eleventh	❑ Announcement of the gift of dhamma as the best gift; declaration of the policy of dhamma as the best policy, emphasizing respect and good behavior.
Twelfth	❑ Introduction of **Ithijika Mahamatta** for women's welfare; appeal for tolerance among sects and understanding the dhamma of others.
Thirteenth	❑ Description of Ashoka's transformation from worshiping Shiva to embracing Buddhism after the Kalinga war; replacement of **Digvijay** with **Dhamma Vijay**; warning to forest tribes against intransigence.
Fourteenth	❑ Reflection on the purpose of rock edicts.

Pillar Edicts and their Corresponding Messages

❑ The grand standalone pillars erected by Ashoka are believed to symbolize the axis of the world, serving as a connection between heaven and earth. These monumental structures, known for their edicts, are located at various sites like **Lauriya-Araraj, Lauriya Nandangarh, Rampurva, Nigali Sagar, Sarnath, Topra, and Meerut.**

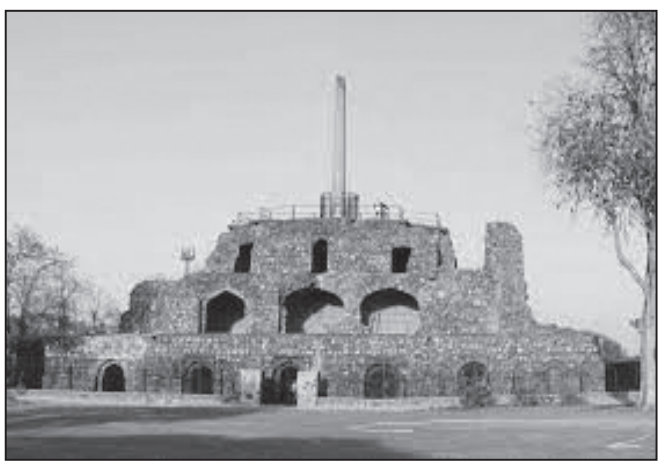


Fig. 7.7: Delhi-Topra Pillar

- Intriguingly, two pillars, originally from **Topra and Meerut**, were relocated to **Delhi** under the rule of **Feroz Shah Tughlaq.**

❑ Notably, some pillars lack inscriptions, including the bull capital pillar at Rampurva, the lion capital pillar at Vaishali, and the uncapped Kolam pillar.

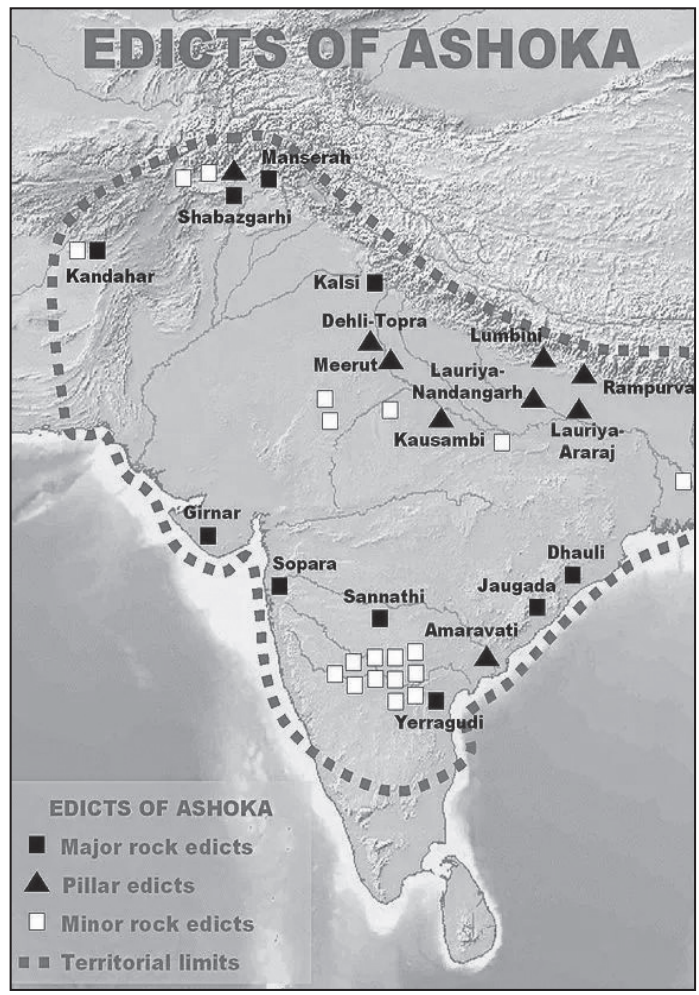


Fig. 7.8: Edicts of Ashoka

In Kanganahalli relief sculpture inscriptions, the name 'Ranyo Ashoka' (King Ashoka) is mentioned along with the stone portrait of Ashoka.

The Ashokan pillars share distinct **characteristics**:

❑ Primarily crafted from **Chunar sandstone,** the pillars exhibit a consistent form and size.

❑ Mostly **monolithic**, i.e., each pillar is carved from a single piece of stone, displaying a glossy, polished surface.

❑ **Devoid of a base**, the smooth, cylindrical shaft gradually narrows upward, reaching a height of 12-14m.

❑ A cylindrical bolt connects the shaft's top to the capital, featuring a bell-shaped design resembling an inverted lotus.

❑ Atop the bell capital rests a platform (**abacus**), square and plain in earlier pillars, evolving into a circular and curved form in later ones.

- All parts of the pillars are intricately carved on every side, suggesting a design intended for panoramic viewing.

The symbols adorning the Ashokan pillars hold diverse and meaningful significance aligned with various prevalent Indian religious customs. Notably, these motifs include:

- The lotus, symbolizing purity and fertility in Indian cultural beliefs. Additionally, the lion, a solar symbol, embodies the Buddha, often referred to as **Sakyasimha**, denoting the lion among the Sakyas.
- The bull symbolizes fertility, while the elephant, significant in Buddhism, represents the belief that the Buddha entered his mother's womb in the form of a white elephant.
- Furthermore, the spoked wheel, known as the **dharmachakra**, signifies both the wheel of dharma and sovereignty.
- Lastly, the horse symbolizes the departure of Siddhartha from his home, adding a poignant element to the rich tapestry of these symbolic representations on the Ashokan pillars.

Some of the important pillar edicts feature the following:

Pillar Edict	Content
First Pillar Edict	❑ Social code
Second Pillar Edict	❑ Describes dhamma as consisting of the least amount of sin, performing virtuous deeds, having compassion, purity, and truthfulness
Third Pillar Edict	❑ Soul and sin
Fourth Pillar Edict	❑ Rajukas
Fifth Pillar Edict	❑ Popularly known as the Delhi-Topra pillar edict, featuring prohibitions regarding animal killing
Sixth Pillar Edict	❑ Welfare of people
Seventh Pillar Edict	❑ Dhamma Mahamattas

Other Relevant Inscriptions and Important Edicts

Inscription	Content
Allahabad – Kosam/ Queen's Edict	❑ Ashoka warns Sangha members against causing division in the ranks. Samudragupta's inscription is on this edict, and Jahangir was probably responsible for its removal to the fort at Allahabad.
Girnar Rock Inscription of Rudradaman	❑ Mentions the Sudarshan Lake constructed by Pushyagupta, a provincial governor of Saurashtra during Chandragupta Maurya's reign.
Kandahar Inscription	❑ Bilingual **Greek, Aramaic** inscription.
Nigali Sagar Inscription (Nepal)	❑ Records the first enlargement of the stupa and Ashoka's visit to the site.
Rummindei Inscription (Nepal)	❑ Commemorates the birthplace of the Buddha. Ashoka visited Lumbini, worshipped here, and gave tax concessions to the villagers.
Sannati Inscription (Karnataka)	❑ Site of all 14 Major Rock Edicts as well as two separate Kalinga edicts.
Kalinga Edict (Bhauli and Jaugada)	❑ Mentions "All men are my children."
Saugaura Copper Plate Inscription	❑ Inscription of Chandragupta Maurya; mentions relief measures adopted during a famine in Magadha.
Minor Rock Edict 1	❑ Indicates that Ashoka turned towards Buddhism gradually (nearly after 2.5 years in power), not suddenly.
Minor Rock Edict 3	❑ Ashoka greets the Sangha, professes his deep faith in the Buddha, dhamma, and Sangha, and recommends six Buddhist texts for monks, nuns, and the general laity.
Shahbazgarhi and Mansehra Inscriptions	❑ Written in Kharosthi script.
Brahmagiri - Minor Rock Edicts I and II	❑ Talk about local administration.

Ashoka's Place in History

Ashoka, often criticized for a pacifist policy that allegedly led to the decline of the Maurya empire, was, in fact, a remarkable ruler with significant achievements.

- **Political Unification:** Ashoka played a pivotal role in politically unifying the vast Mauryan empire. He strengthened the unity through the promotion of one dharma, one language, and a common script, mainly Brahmı, used in his inscriptions. Respect for various scripts and languages, including Brahmı, Kharosthi, Aramaic, Greek, Prakrit, and Sanskrit, showcased his inclusive approach.

- **Tolerance and Religious Policy:** Ashoka's religious policy was characterized by tolerance. Unlike forcing Buddhism on his subjects, he made notable gifts to non-Buddhist and anti-Buddhist sects. Gift donations included offerings to the Ajivika ascetics, demonstrating his commitment to religious diversity.
- **Missionary Activities:** Fueled by zeal, Ashoka engaged in extensive missionary activities. By deputing officials to far-flung parts of the empire, he facilitated administrative efficiency and fostered cultural connections between the advanced Gangetic basin and distant provinces.
- **Ashoka's Forward-Looking Policy:** Ashoka's legacy extends beyond his immediate rule, with profound impacts on India's history and global cultural diplomacy. Ashoka's legacy includes the promotion of tolerance not only in the religious sphere but also in terms of scripts and languages. He respected various scripts like Kharosthi, Aramaic, and Greek, and languages such as Greek, Prakrit, and Sanskrit.
- **Cultural Contacts and Innovation:** Ashoka's innovative administrative changes not only transformed internal governance but also fostered cultural contacts between Indian states and the wider world. Regarded as the first global cultural ambassador of India, Ashoka left an indelible mark on intercultural exchanges.
- **Policy of Peace and Non-Aggression:** Ashoka's commitment to a policy of peace, non-conquest, and non-aggression set him apart in history. Advancing a pacific policy, he advocated for a shift from the earlier policy of conquest and aggression, marking a forward-looking approach.
- **Challenges and Limitations:** Ashoka's policy did not have a lasting impact on his viceroys and vassals, who declared independence after his retirement in 232 BC. Neighboring regions, within 25 years of Ashoka's departure, saw invasions on the north-western frontier, revealing the limitations of his long-term influence.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

Examine the philosophical nuances of Ashoka's dhamma as reflected in his inscriptions. Discuss the practical implications of Ashoka's dhamma on his subjects and the administration of the Mauryan Empire.

In essence, Ashoka's reign marked a pivotal period in ancient Indian history, characterized by political unification, religious tolerance, and a visionary approach to governance. His legacy, though faced with challenges, laid the foundation for enduring cultural diplomacy and a policy of peace that transcended his time.

LATER MAURYAS

- After Ashoka's demise, the Mauryan Empire underwent a division into two realms:
  - **Western part rulers:** Kunala and briefly Samprati.
  - **Eastern part rulers:** Dasratha, Samprati, Salisuka, Devaraman, Satadhanvan, and finally Brihadratha.

Brihadratha

- The Maurya empire declined rapidly after Ashoka and the later kings had very short reigns. The empire became weak and fragmented, and the Mauryan dynasty came to an end when the last king, Brihadratha, was killed by his military commander, **Pushyamitra Sunga, in 187 BCE.**

MAURYAN ADMINISTRATION

The Maurya period in ancient India witnessed a profound transformation in governance, marked by innovative administrative changes and a centralized rule. The king, at the helm, embodied both paternal despotism and, at times, divine rule, shaping a bureaucratic system that had a lasting impact on the region. The features are as follows:

At the core of the Mauryan administration was the king, recognized as the soul of the state. According to the Arthashastra, the concept of **saptanga rajya** outlined seven interlinked elements, portraying the intricate balance governing Mauryan rule. Despite assistance from a council of ministers in daily affairs, the king retained the authority to make final decisions, underscoring his accessibility and agility in administrative matters. The main administrative units were:

Administrative Unit	Composition
Sthaniya Drona	Administrative unit of 800 villages.
Mukha	Subdivision of Sthaniya Drona, it consists of 400 villages.
Kharvatika	Further division below Mukha, it consists of 200 villages.
Samgrahana	The smallest administrative unit, it consists of 10 villages.

Saptanga Rajya According to Kautilya

- **Svamin (King):** Kautilya emphasizes the pivotal role of the king, considering him the soul of all seven elements. The king, designated as **Dharmapravakta**, promulgates social orders and issues royal rescripts (Rajasasana).
  - Despite assistance from a council of ministers, the king makes final decisions on revenue, law and order, war, and other administrative matters.
  - Accessibility and agility are highlighted, with Ashoka exemplifying these qualities by allowing common people to meet him and expressing concern for their welfare.

- **Amatya (High Officials/Ministers):** The king appoints a council of ministers known as Mantriparishad to aid in day-to-day administration. The larger **Mantraparishad**, influential in advising the king and making key appointments, includes high ministers known as **Maha-Mantrins**.
  - Different bodies, such as **Nikayas** and **Tirthas**, play roles in managing ordinary affairs and overseeing economic functions.
- The Tirthas, consisting of high officials such as the chief minister, high priest, heir-apparent, and commander-in-chief, formed the administrative backbone. Disparities in salaries between the highest and lowest echelons of government officials were notable, emphasizing the hierarchical nature of Mauryan governance.
- **Janapada (Territory and Population):** The Mauryan Empire is divided into provinces, including **Magadha, Taxila, Suvarnagiri, Tosali, Ujjain, and later Kalinga** during Ashoka's reign. Viceroy-led provincial administrations are responsible for law and order and tax collection. Autonomous territories also exist within the empire.
- **Kautilya's Tests for Amatyas:** Kautilya lays down specific tests for the appointment of Amatyas (administrative officials):

Tests	Meaning/Explanation
Dharmopadhasuddha	Officials in charge of **civil and criminal justice** must be sufficiently religious-minded.
Arthopadhasuddha	Appointees to the chancellor of the exchequer must pass a money test.
Kamopadhasuddha	Those assigned to pleasure gardens must pass a love test.
Bhayopadhasuddha	Officials needing bold and immediate action must pass a fear test.

These tests aim to ensure the suitability of Amatyas by subjecting them to various challenges, reflecting Kautilya's meticulous approach to governance.

- **Vigilance and Security Measures:** Security was paramount, and the Mauryans employed an extensive network of spies for intelligence gathering. Both stationary and wandering spies were integral, with specific mention of female personal bodyguards skilled in archery.
  - The Arthashastra provided detailed insights into the king's security, including secret emergency exits, examination techniques for items entering the palace, and a robust system of spies, including Overseers and specific mention of Pativedakas and Pulisani as special reporters.

Region	State Capital
Uttarapatha	Taxila
Dakshinapatha	Suvarnagiri
Eastern India	Tosali
Avantiratha	Ujjain
Kalinga	Tasali/Dhauli

- **Provincial Administration:** Beyond the central authority, the Mauryan Empire's administrative structure extended to provinces overseen by viceroys. The provinces were further divided into divisions, districts, and villages, creating a hierarchical administrative framework. While Magadha was under strict supervision, outlying regions experienced varying degrees of administrative control.
- **City administration:** The municipal administration of Pataliputra, the capital city of Mauryas, was unique.
- The city administration of Pataliputra, according to Megasthenes and corroborated by Arthashastra, was conducted by six committees of five members each.
- Each committee was assigned different subjects such as industry, foreigners, birth and death registration, trade and market regulations, and tax collection to look after.

Officials and their roles:

Provincial Organization:

- **Pradeshikas:** Headed divisions; no advisory council.
- **Divisional Structure:** Divided into districts.

District Administration:

- **Rajukas:** Officials overseeing districts; term derived from "rajju" (rope), possibly indicating land measurement.
- **Yuktas:** Clerks supporting Rajukas in accounting and secretarial tasks.

Local Village Units:

- **Sthanikas:** Leaders of groups of 5 or 10 villages; responsible for tax collection.
- **Gopas:** Assistants to Sthanikas; maintained records and accounts.

Village Administration:

- **Gramini/Gramika:** Village head, consulted with Grama-vriddhas (village elders).
- **Structural Hierarchy:** The Maurya administration formed a pyramid structure, with Gramini at the base and the king at the top.

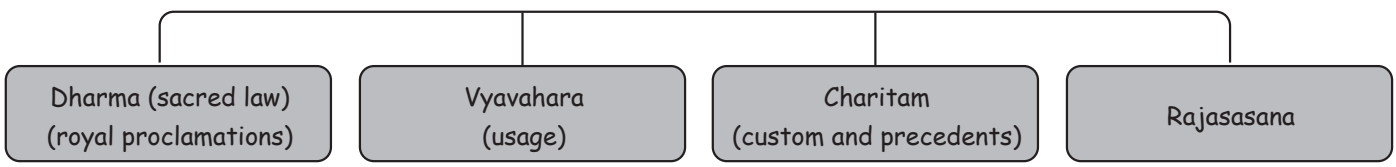
Committee/Board	Function
Industry	Oversight of commodity production, quality of raw materials, determining the fair value of articles, and certifying finished articles for suitability in the market.

Foreigners	Protection and well-being of foreigners; sending physicians to attend to foreigners' health, arranging burials, and delivering their property to the family in case of death.
Vital Statistics	Enquiry into the circumstances of births and deaths; registration for tax purposes and to ensure government awareness of all births and deaths.
Trade, Commerce, and Market Regulations	It monitored the standards of weights and measures, ensuring the timely sale of goods before their quality declined. Additionally, it guaranteed that seasonal products were announced for public sale, and restricted individuals from engaging in transactions involving more than one commodity, unless they paid double or triple taxes based on the number of commodities involved. Kautilya also proposed that the proceeds collected in the form of grain should be stored as a reserve to be utilized during periods of food scarcity.
Manufactured Articles	Supervised public notice for the sale of manufactured articles, prevent of mixing or piling of new and old stock.
Tax Collection	Collection of one-tenth of the prices of articles or produce sold as tax, with the death penalty as punishment for fraud in tax payment.

- **Durga (Fortified Capital):** The Mauryans maintained a substantial army, with figures mentioned by Greek writer Justin, potentially exaggerated, including infantry, cavalry, elephants, and chariots. The construction of the main fort in the capital city was detailed by Kautilya, emphasizing the need for multiple moats, ample supplies, and secret escape routes. The military structure included higher officers, such as Anta-Mahamattas, responsible for frontier fort security. A standing army recruited from all varnas was endorsed.

Official	Function
Panyadhyaksha	In charge of trade, price fixation, and sale of state-produced goods.
Sansthadhyaksha	Superintendent of markets.
Rupadarshaka	Inspector of coins.
Pautavadhyaksha	In charge of standardized weights and measures.

- **Kosha (Treasury):** The Mauryan economy was diverse, relying on agriculture, animal husbandry, trade, and taxes in both cash and kind. Land revenue, primarily from agriculture, was a significant income source.
  - Irrigated land attracted additional taxes, emphasizing the importance of irrigation. The state engaged in economic activities, including the foundation of new agricultural settlements.
  - Taxes on trade, excise duties, and other levies augmented state revenue. The Mauryans regulated trade, agriculture, and urban activities through various officials and boards.
- **Danda/Bala (Justice or Force):** Judicial administration was under the king's supreme authority, personally adjudicating cases. Judges, called **Dharmasthas**, were responsible for civil and criminal cases, and Pradeshtris handled criminal suppression.



  - Various civil and criminal courts operated at the local level, with severe punishments, including decapitation and amputation, depending on the nature, gravity, circumstances, and varna of the offender and plaintiff.
  - Judicial fairness was emphasized by Ashoka, as indicated on **Pillar Edict 4.** Four sources of law are mentioned by Kautilya.
- **Mitra (ally):**
  - From the point of view of the Vijigishu (the would-be conqueror), Kautilya discusses the inter-state policy and takes into account all possible circumstances. He lists Shad-gunya (six policies) that the king should follow in these circumstances:
    - **Policy of Sandhi (peace treaty):** If one is weaker than the enemy
    - **Policy of Vigraha (hostility):** If one is stronger than the enemy
    - **Policy of Asana (keeping quiet):** If one's power is equal to that of the enemy
    - **Policy of Yana (marching on a military expedition):** If one is much stronger than the enemy
    - **Policy of Samshraya (seeking shelter with another king or in a fort):** If one is very weak

- ❒ **Double Policy of Dvaidhibhava (sandhi with one king and vigraha with another):** If one can fight the enemy with the help of an ally.

- The Mauryas had great diplomatic relations with various Hellenistic kingdoms and even South Asian countries. Probably they had a full-fledged department of foreign affairs for the same. In Arthashastra, there is mention of certain diplomatic posts.

a. Nisriharthaduta → Full-fledged Ambassador

b. Parimitarthaduta → could not go beyond his instruction in negotiation

c. Sasanharaduta → Special Messenger

❑ **Census:**

- The taking of Census was regular during the Mauryan period.
- The village officials were to number the people along with other details like their caste and occupation. They were also to count the animals in each house. The census in the towns was taken by municipal officials to track the movement of population, both foreign and indigenous. The data collected were cross-checked by the spies. The Census appears to be a permanent institution in the Mauryan administration.

The Maurya period left an enduring legacy on ancient Indian history, characterized by a sophisticated administrative system, strong state control, and a comprehensive approach to governance. The interplay of centralized authority, security measures, economic policies, and diplomatic relations not only shaped the governance model of the time but also influenced various facets of society, leaving an indelible mark on the historical narrative of ancient India.

MAURYAN ECONOMY

The Arthashastra of Kautilya outlines the sophisticated economic administration of the Mauryan state, which involved the appointment of 27 superintendents (**adhyakshas**) to regulate key economic activities.

❑ **Agriculture and State Farms:** The Mauryas actively engaged in agriculture, with large state-owned farms called 'Sita' supervised by sitadhyakshas. These farms, worked by numerous slaves and hired laborers, were a significant source of royal income alongside private cultivation, subject to state taxes.

❑ **State Involvement in Trade and Production:** The Mauryan state participated directly in trade and commodity production. State goods were typically sold by state servants, though private traders were also involved. Monopolies were established by the state over mining, metallurgy, armaments, ship-building, coins, currency, and salt production.

❑ **Mining Monopoly and Revenue Generation:** The state held a monopoly over mining resources such as iron, gold, silver, and copper, contributing to its power. This control, combined with the disarmament of the rural population, strengthened the Mauryan government. Various taxes, including the land tax (Bhaga), irrigation cess, customs, ferry charges, and taxes on guilds of artisans, were crucial for revenue.

❑ **Settlement Policies and Agricultural Development:** The Mauryan state initiated settlement policies, founding new settlements and rehabilitating decaying ones by relocating surplus populations. The state supported Shudras in settling as farmers, granting fiscal exemptions and initial resources. Large-scale land clearing and cultivation under state supervision led to significant growth in settled agriculture, particularly in the Gangetic valley.

❑ **Trade Expansion and Internal Communication:** Agricultural surplus facilitated trade growth, fostered by the development of an internal communication system. North Indian rivers served as convenient transport routes. Diplomatic relations with the Greeks under Bindusara and Ashoka further boosted foreign trade with the western regions.

❑ **Introduction of Currency and Fiscal Measures:** The use of currency became widespread in the Mauryan period, not only for trade but also for government payments to officials. Kautilya recommended various fiscal measures, especially in times of emergency.

❑ **Coinage Centers and Pottery Signatures:** Punch-marked coins, primarily of silver, were abundant in eastern U.P. and Bihar during the Mauryan age. Additionally, the distinctive Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW) pottery, characteristic of the Mauryan period, was found in sites like Mahasthangarh and Chandraketugarh.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

How can the principles outlined in the Arthashastra be applied to modern economic governance, and are there parallels between the appointed superintendents of the Mauryan state and regulatory bodies in today's global economy?

THE MAURYAN SOCIETY

Despite the influence of Buddhism and Jainism, the varna system persisted during the Mauryan period. The social hierarchy was dominated by Brahmanas and Kshatriyas. Other notable features were:

Impact of Trade and Commerce

- **Vaishyas' Social Status:** Greater engagement in trade and commerce led to an improvement in the social status of Vaishyas or trading communities.
- **Shudras' Involvement:** With increased economic activities, Shudras found opportunities in agricultural and artisanal pursuits.
- **Untouchables (Chandalas and Shvapakas):** The period witnessed a rise in the number of untouchables, including Chandalas and Shvapakas (dog breeders), who were also referred to as Antavasayin (living at the end).

Surprisingly, Ashoka's inscriptions do not mention either the Varna system or the practice of Sati.

Slavery in Mauryan Society:

- Despite Megasthenes lauding Indian society for not having slaves, evidence from sources like the Arthashastra suggests the existence of slavery.
- The Arthashastra mentions that **"no Arya or freeman could be reduced to slavery."** Ashokan inscriptions also refer to **dasas** (slaves), confirming the presence of slavery in Mauryan India.
- Kautilya's Arthashastra outlines rules and penalties for the treatment of male and female slaves. For instance, punishments were prescribed for selling or mortgaging a pregnant woman as a slave without making arrangements for her maternity.
- Instances of manumission of slaves are documented, allowing individuals to buy their freedom. In certain cases, a **dasi** (female slave) who bore her master a son could gain release from enslavement. The child was considered the legitimate child of the father.
- While discussing dhamma, Ashoka's edicts emphasized courteous behavior towards **dasas (slaves) and bhatakas/bhritakas (servants).**
- This organization should provide a structured presentation of the information you provided on the Mauryan society, encompassing the Varna system, the impact of trade, the presence of untouchables, and the complex dynamics of slavery during that period.

MAURYAN ART AND SCULPTURE

The magnanimous Mauryan power found expression in monumental stone sculptures and structures, ushering in significant developments in rock-cut and stupa architecture during the Mauryan period. Stone culture emerged dramatically as the principal medium of Indian arts, intricately linked with the political and religious ideology of the time. Mauryan kings, especially Ashoka, were prominent patrons of various art forms, including stone sculptures, ring stones, disc stones, terracotta figurines, and stupa architecture.

- **Stupa:**
  - **Sanchi (Vidisha) and Bharhut (Dewar)** in M. P., **Bairat** in Rajasthan and **Piparva** in UP are from Mauryan period.
  - Stupas are associated with **Hinayana** Buddhism.
  - Ashoka, in particular, played a crucial role in popularizing the stupa cult by redistributing Buddha's relics to major towns and ordering the construction of around **84,000 stupas**, marking a groundbreaking innovation with the substitution of stone for wood and brick. Other features:
- **Stone Sculptures and Rock-Cut Architecture:** Ashokan pillars at **Rampurva, Lauriya Nandangarh, and Sarnath** stand as excellent examples of circular and monolithic stone sculptures crafted from sandstone found at **Chunar, near Mirzapur in U.P**.

Fig. 7.9: Lion Capital of Ashoka

  - The Mauryan period also witnessed the inception of **rock-cut architecture**, exemplified by the magnificent **Lomasha Risi** cave in the **Barabara hills near Gaya** and the grand **Dhauli caves near Bhubaneswar, Odisha**, featuring a rock sculpture of the front part of an elephant.
  - Notably, the famous **Vajrasana**, or the throne of meditation, at the **Mahabodhi temple in Bodh Gaya**, is believed to belong to this artistic period.
  - Noteworthy **wooden architectural heritage** includes the **Lomasha Risi** and **Sudama caves of Gaya.**

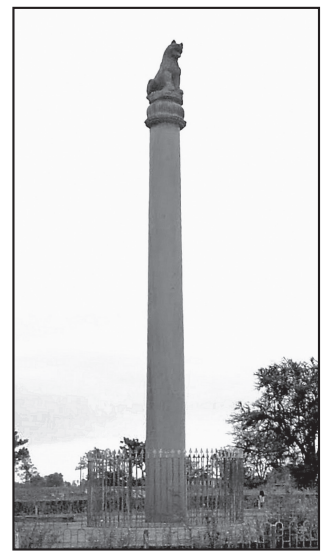


Fig. 7.10: Lauria Nandangarh pillar

- **Notable Sculptures:** Among the myriad stone and terracotta sculptures of the era, the **Didarganj Yakshini**, a polished stone sculpture of a female, and a polished Chunar sandstone sculpture of the torso of a nude male figure found at **Lohanipur in Patna**, showcase the artistic prowess of Mauryan artisans.
  - Additionally, the stone portrait of Ashoka discovered at **Kanaganahalli, near Sannati, Karnataka**, stands as a spectacular testament to Mauryan artistry.

- **Centers of Learning:** During the Mauryan period, renowned centers of learning flourished at Taxila, Ujjain, and Varanasi.
  - In literature, **Bhadrabahu's Kalpasutra** is attributed to this intellectually vibrant era.
- **Material Culture in Gangetic Plains:** In the Gangetic basin, the Maurya period witnessed a rapid development of material culture, marked by the intensive use of iron, the circulation of punch-marked coins, the presence of exquisite pottery known as **Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW)**, the introduction of burnt bricks and ring wells, and a notable rise of towns in north-eastern India.

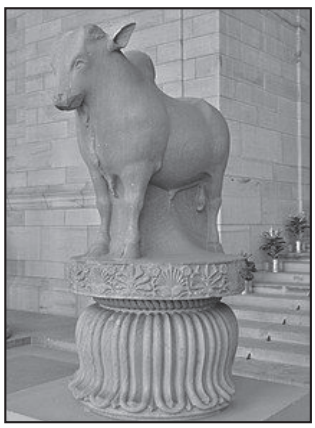


Fig. 7.11: Bull Capital, Rampurva

  - The prolific use of iron implements, including socketed axes, sickles, and ploughshares, became widespread, with easy access to rich iron ores in southern Bihar contributing to their prevalence.
- **Introduction of Burnt Bricks and Timber:** During the Maurya period, burnt bricks were introduced for the first time in north-eastern India. Structures made of burnt bricks were discovered in **Bihar and Uttar Pradesh**, reflecting an innovative approach to construction. Houses were crafted using both bricks and timber, the latter being abundant due to the thick vegetation in ancient times.

Fig. 7.12: Lomas Rishi Cave

  - Megasthenes, a Greek writer, noted the presence of wooden structures in the Maurya capital, Pataliputra, emphasizing the significance of timber in the architectural landscape.
- **Material Culture in Gangetic Plains:** The diffusion of material culture extended beyond the heart of the Mauryan empire to its outlying provinces. Ring wells, initially appearing in the Gangetic basin, became a crucial element that spread to distant areas. These wells not only provided domestic water supply but also served as soakage pits in congested settlements, altering settlement patterns by reducing the necessity to establish towns solely along riverbanks.
- **Transfer of Gangetic Material Culture to Peripheries:** The elements of the middle Gangetic material culture underwent modification and were transferred to regions such as northern Bengal, Kalinga, Andhra, and Karnataka.
  - In Bangladesh and Orissa, evidence of **Maurya Brahmi and NBPW** artifacts indicates the influence of Gangetic associations. Settlements like Sisupalgarh in Orissa, ascribed to Maurya times, feature NBPW, iron implements, and punch-marked coins, suggesting a spread of material culture through contact with Magadha.

Fig. 7.13: Terracota goddess

- **Acculturation and Systematic Policy of Ashoka:** Ashoka, in line with Kautilya's advice, initiated a systematic policy of acculturation. This policy involved the founding of settlements with the assistance of cultivators (likely **vaisyas**) and **sudra** laborers drawn from overpopulated areas.
  - The state supported new peasants with tax remission, cattle, seeds, and money to encourage cultivation and settlement.
  - Ashoka's deliberate efforts aimed at diffusing dharma and higher cultural elements succeeded, as tribal people, under the influence of **dharmamahamatras**, adopted the habits of settled, taxpaying, peasant societies.
  - Ashoka's policy facilitated the mingling of different cultures, promoting a transition from tribal traditions to a more structured societal framework.

The Mauryan period not only witnessed the establishment of a formidable state machinery but also saw the far-reaching impact of Mauryan conquests on material culture, shaping the cultural landscape of both the heartland and the peripheries of the empire. The Mauryans made a remarkable contribution to art and architecture, leaving a lasting legacy that blended indigenous styles with external influences. The grandeur of Mauryan artistic endeavors is evident not only in monumental structures but also in the intricacies of sculptural masterpieces.

DECLINE OF MAURYAS

The Mauryan empire started falling apart shortly after Ashoka's death, around 232 BCE. Following Ashoka, a series of ineffective rulers took the throne. Surprisingly, only one of the later Mauryan kings, namely **King Dasaratha**, is known to have left inscriptions. Various factors contributed to the decline and eventual collapse of the Mauryan empire. These include:

- **Brahmanical Reaction:** The decline of the Mauryan empire, initiated soon after Ashoka's demise in 232 BCE, was marked by a Brahmanical reaction against the Buddhist-influenced policies of the Mauryan rulers. Ashoka's anti-sacrifice stance and criticism of superfluous rituals likely diminished the income and livelihood options of Brahmanas.
  - The appointment of **Dhamma Mahamattas** may have conflicted with the Brahmanas' traditional role as custodians of social morality, leading to hostility.
  - Some post-Mauryan kingdoms, such as the **Shungas, Kanvas, and Satavahanas**, were notably ruled by Brahmanas, indicating a shift in political power dynamics.
- **Lack of Army Preparedness:** Ashoka's pacifist policies and emphasis on Buddhism resulted in a lack of preparedness in the Mauryan army. This vulnerability may have played a role in the success of the Greek invasion.
  - Scholars, including Harprasad Shastri, suggest that Ashoka's pro-Buddhist and pacifist approach contributed to the discontent of the Brahmanas and ultimately led to the decline of the Mauryan empire.
- **Oppressive Rule in Provinces:** The misrule and corruption of officials in certain provinces contributed to the empire's decline. Instances of citizen complaints prompted actions such as Ashoka's appointment as viceroy of Taxila to address grievances against corrupt bureaucrats.
  - The Kalinga edicts reflect Ashoka's concern about oppression in the provinces, emphasizing the need for fair treatment of the populace.
- **Financial Crisis:** The massive expenditure on maintaining a large army and bureaucracy strained the Mauryan treasury, leading to a financial crisis. The establishment of settlements on newly cleared lands, initially exempted from taxes, further burdened the treasury.
  - D.D. Koshambi supports this perspective, asserting that economic pressures resulting from the vast military and bureaucratic apparatus may have contributed to the crisis.
- **Spread of Material Culture in Outlying Areas:** The dissemination of new knowledge, particularly in iron tools and weapons, to peripheral regions diminished Magadha's strategic advantage. New kingdoms, such as the Shungas, Kanvas, Chetis, and Satavahanas, emerged and thrived based on the material culture acquired from Magadha. This diffusion of knowledge weakened the central authority's influence in outlying areas.
- **Neglect of North-West Frontier:** The neglect of safeguarding the north-west frontier proved detrimental to the Mauryans. Unlike the Great Wall of China constructed by the Chinese ruler Shih Huang Ti to protect against nomadic tribes, Ashoka did not implement such measures. This negligence of robust boundary structure allowed Central Asian nomadic tribes like the **Scythians** to move towards India, leading to invasions by the Parthians, Shakas, and Greeks in the third century BCE.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

Draw parallels between the factors contributing to the decline of the Mauryan Empire and the challenges faced by nations today. How do issues such as political instability, financial crises, and neglect of borders affect contemporary geopolitics?

Thus, the Mauryan empire's decline stemmed from a Brahmanical reaction, military unpreparedness, and oppressive provincial rule. Financial strain, the spread of material culture, and neglect of the northwest frontier accelerated its fall. Succession issues with weak rulers, exemplified by King Dasaratha's solitary inscriptions, marked a pivotal downfall. In essence, internal and external pressures culminated in the unraveling of the once-magnificent Mauryan empire.

CONCLUSION

The Mauryan Empire, a pivotal era in ancient Indian history, left an indelible mark on the subcontinent's sociopolitical landscape. From Chandragupta's strategic acumen to Ashoka's benevolent rule, the empire's narrative unfolds through victories, setbacks, and eventual decline. Chandragupta's governance strategies, informed by Chanakya's Arthashastra, laid the foundation for a vast realm. Ashoka's reign, marked by ethical governance, witnessed the spread of his edicts promoting kindness and peace. Despite challenges from Brahmanas, financial strains, and cultural diffusion, the Mauryan legacy endures. While the empire waned, its administrative concepts influenced later rulers. Ashoka's commitment to virtuous rule resonates, leaving an enduring impact on Indian culture. This epoch, characterized by astute leadership, military prowess, and cultural patronage, exemplifies the ebb and flow of empires and the lasting imprint of visionary leaders.

Developments During 200 BCE - 300 CE

8

The period between 200 BCE and 300 CE was distinct from the time of the Mauryan Empire. It is remarkable for its historical, political, and cultural contributions. During this era, political attention shifted from Magadha to North-western India due to a series of invasions, leading to the emergence of numerous regional kingdoms. This phase was characterised by new governance traditions, including joint and subordinate rule.

Urban culture and cities expanded notably, with an increase in specialized crafts and a significant growth in trade networks. The economy witnessed a rise in the use of currency. Additionally, this period was marked by cultural intermingling, the flourishing of doctrinal debates, the popularisation of devotional worship involving images, and the institutionalization of religious activities. It was also a time of evolving sculptural and architectural styles, contributing greatly to the diverse heritage of the subcontinent.

SOURCES OF HISTORY OF THIS PHASE

Literary Sources

- **Buddhist Texts:** The Jatakas, containing stories of ordinary people, traders, and travelers, along with other works like the **Milindapanha** and **Lalitavistara**, provide incidental historical references.
- **Dharmasutras and Smritis**: Texts like the **Manava Dharmashastra** and **Yajnavalkya Smriti** represent Brahmanical discourses, shedding light on the society of their time.
- **Sanskrit Drama**: Works of **Ashvaghosha**, including the **Sariputraprakarana**, and other texts like the **Buddhacharita**, are important for cultural studies.
- **Sangam Literature:** This Tamil literature includes poems and songs that are a rich source for understanding the society of Tamilakam.

Classical Accounts

- **Graeco-Roman Texts:** Works by authors like **Arrian, Strabo, and Pliny the Elder**, along with the **Periplus Maris Erythraei**, provide insights, especially into trade history.
- **Chinese Texts:** Texts like the **Chien Han-shu** and the **Hou Han-shu** offer information on movements in central Asia impacting north India.

Archaeological Sources

Archaeology reveals information on settlement patterns, crafts, and trade. The **Shunga–Kushana** levels in north India and the transition from megalithic to urban phases in the Deccan and South India are particularly relevant.

Inscriptions

A variety of inscriptions from this period, including royal inscriptions and records of donations, offer insights into social history and religious practices. These inscriptions reflect a transition from Prakrit towards Sanskrit in north India and the appearance of Tamil inscriptions in the south.

Numismatic Evidence

Coins from different dynasties and regions, including those of the **Indo-Greeks, Kushanas, Satavahanas, and Roman** imitations, provide valuable information on political and economic institutions.

POLITICAL HISTORY OF NORTH INDIA

The Besnagar pillar inscription of Heliodorus

An interesting inscription from the Shunga era is found on a pillar in Besnagar, located at the historical site of Vidisha. This inscription, primarily in Prakrit with some elements of Sanskrit, is crafted in the Brahmi script. It reveals that the Shungas upheld the Mauryan practice of hosting ambassadors from Greek realms. The pillar also mentions of the garuda, a mythical bird and the mount of Vishnu.

Fig. 8.1: Besnagar Inscription

The last Mauryan ruler, Brihadratha, was assassinated in 187 BCE while inspecting his troops by his commander-in-chief, Pushyamitra Shunga. Thus, the Maurya rule came to an end, and the Shunga Dynasty took over as rulers of Magadha. However, Pushyamitra's reign encompassed only a portion of the former Maurya empire. It included **Pataliputra, Ayodhya, Vidisha**, and specific regions of present-day Punjab, such as **Jalandhar and Sakala (Sialkot)**.

Buddhist and Brahminical texts, including the **Harshacharita**, the **Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, Panini's Ashtadhyayi, Kalidasa's Malavikaagnimitram, Divyavadana, and Tarantha's (a Buddhist scholar) account,** make reference to the Sungas, who were Brahmanas by caste. Presumably, the ten Sunga monarchs ruled for a grand total of 112 years.

INDIGENOUS DYNASTIES

Shunga Dynasty (185 BCE–75 BCE)

Pushyamitra Shunga:

- Pushyamitra Shunga functioned as the chief commander of the Mauryan Army.
- According to the **Ayodhya stone inscription** of King Dhana, he conducted two **Ashvamedha** sacrifices.
- His rule extended from the **Narmada River to cities like Pataliputra, Ayodhya, Vidisha,** and others in the southern region.

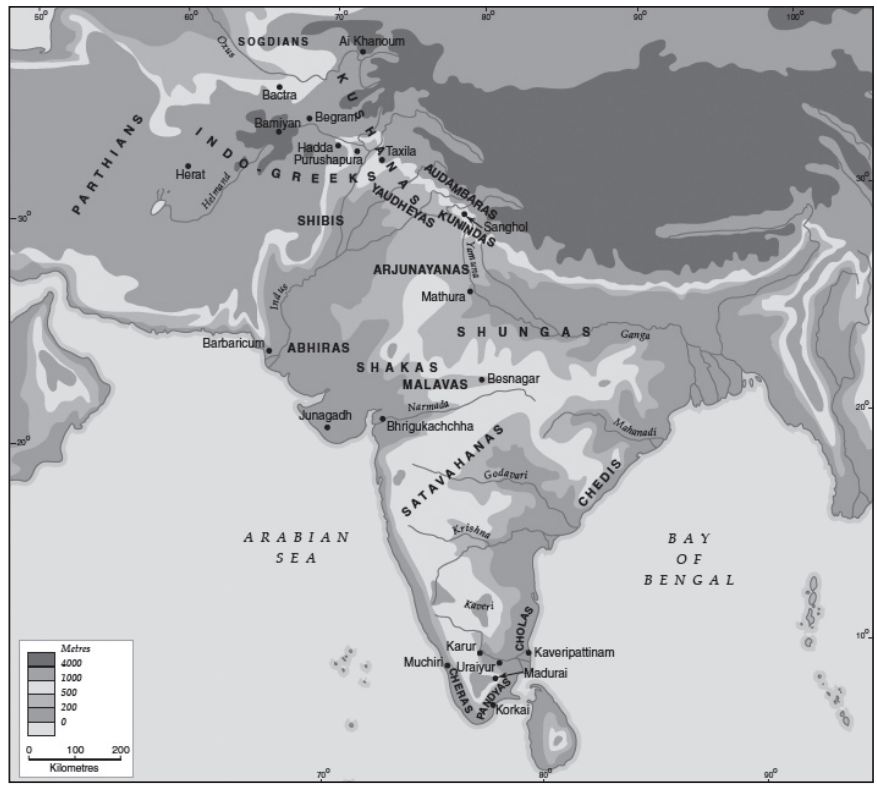


Fig. 8.2: Dynasties of India and Central Asia

- In the Sanskrit play, **Malavikaagnimitram by Kalidasa**, there is an account of Pushyamitra's conflict with **Yajnasena**, the king of **Vidarbha**, and the Shungas' triumph over Yajnasena.
- Pushyamitra emerged victorious in a battle against **Demetrius**, **the Bactrian Greek king**, mentioned in Patanjali's texts.
- Patanjali, a renowned grammarian and composer of **Mahabhashya,** was contemporaneous with Pushyamitra Shunga and referenced the conflict with the **Yavanas (or strangers from the west who come up to Ayodhya and Chittor)**.
- The **Divyavadana**, a Sanskrit anthology, narrates Pushyamitra's animosity towards Buddhism.
  - He also destroyed many Buddhist stupas.

Agnimitra:

- The next ruler was Agnimi Shunga; he was the hero of Kalidasa's Malavikagnimitram.
- He was described in this drama as the **viceroy of Vidisha.**

Vasumitra:

- Agnimitra Shunga was followed by Vasumitra Shunga.
- He reconstructed the Buddhist stupas that were destroyed by Pushyamitra Shunga.

Bhagabhadra/Bhagavata:

- The inscription on the **Besnagar Pillar (also popularly known as Garudadhwaja)** points towards a ruler named **Kasiputa Bhagabhadr**a. He was either the fifth Shunga king or Bhagavata, possibly the ninth king.
- The inscription also mentions **Heliodorus,** who served as a **Greek ambassador** at the court of Amtalakita/ Antialkidas, the Indo-Greek ruler of Taxila.
  - In the inscription, Heliodorus identifies himself as a Bhagavata, signifying his devotion to both **Lord Krishna and Vishnu.**
  - He mentions in the inscription that he erected the pillar as a mark of his devotion to this deity. The pillar is considered the first archaeological evidence of Vishnu worship.

Devabhuti:

- He was the last ruler of the Shunga Dynasty and was also known as Devabhumi.
- According to the **Harschcharita**, he was assassinated by his Brahmana minister, **Vasudeva Kanva,** who established the Kanva dynasty.
- The Satavahanas superseded the Shunga empire's ruins in central India.

The Significance of the Shunga Rule:

- **Defensive Role:** The Shunga dynasty played a crucial role in safeguarding the Gangetic Valley from external threats.
- **Cultural Revival and Promotion:** In the realm of culture, their reign witnessed a revival of Brahmanism and the practice of horse sacrifice.
  - The Shungas actively promoted the expansion of Vaishnavism and the use of the Sanskrit language.

In essence, the Shunga rule can be seen as a precursor to the flourishing golden age of the Guptas.

Kanva Dynasty (75 BCE-30 BCE)

Vasudeva:

- It is believed that Vasudeva ruled from Patliputra and belonged to the line of **Rishi Kanva.**
- There were only ambiguous references to the Kanvas in later writings. Further, they were referred to as the **Sungabhrityas**, which translates to '**Servants of the Shungas.'**
- Vasudeva Kanva promoted **Vedic Hinduism.**
- Around 30 BCE, Kanva made way for the **Mitras**, who were later driven out of Magadha by the Shakas.
- Some scholars suggest that a Satavahana dynasty descendant named Simuka toppled the last Kanva emperor, **Susharman**.

At approximately the same time, in 200 BCE, there were invasions by several different **Central Asian and Western Chinese** ethnic groups. These were the **Parthians**, also known as the **Pahlavas, the Kushanas, the Scythians, the Shakas, and the Indo-Greeks.** In addition to altering the political landscape of northwest India, these invasions contributed to the spread and transformation of Indian and Central Asian cultural aspects.

FOREIGN DYNASTIES

Indo–Greeks/ Bactrian Greeks

Settlement of Bactrian Greeks:

- Following Alexander the Great's demise in 323 BCE, a significant number of Greeks settled along India's North-western frontiers, particularly in Bactria, now part of northern Afghanistan.
- These settlers, known as the Bactrian Greeks, were originally subordinate rulers under the **Seleucid Empire** in **West Asia** and had Greek heritage.
- In the 250 BCE, **Diodotus I**, the governor of Bactria, rebelled against **Antiochus** of the Seleucid Empire, establishing an independent Bactrian Greek kingdom.

Decline of Bactrian Greeks and Rise of Indo-Greeks:

- Around 145 BCE, the Bactrian Greeks lost control over Bactria due to the increasing pressure from **Scythian tribes** but managed to maintain their rule in the North-western part of the Indian sub-continent for a few more decades.
- These rulers are recognized as the Indo-Greeks, who governed parts of north-western India between the 2nd century BCE and the early 1st century BCE.
- **Impact of the Great Wall of China:** The construction of the Great Wall of China led to the Scythians being repelled from China, turning their focus towards the neighbouring Greeks and **Parthians**. Consequently, the Bactrian Greeks, seeking refuge from the Scythian tribes, invaded India.
- The successors of Ashoka were too weak to resist, leading to a series of invasions on India's North-western border. The Indo-Greeks, who began their invasion in the early 2nd century BCE, occupied a vast area of North-western India, even larger than Alexander's conquests, possibly extending as far as **Ayodhya and Pataliputra.**
- Indo-Greeks settled in northwest India in three branches, namely, **Bactria, Taxila, and Sialkot (Sakal).**
- Taxila Branch had diplomatic relations with **Vidisha,** and the **King of Taxila Branch, Antialcidas Nikephoros, sent his son Heliodorus to the court of Krishna/Vasudeva.**
- **Peshawar, Bamiyan, Hadda, and Baigram** were other important places associated with Indo-Greeks.

Indo-Greek Kings and Numismatic Evidence:

Notably, the Indo-Greeks were the **first to mint gold coins** in the region, with their history largely deduced from excavated coins, including those made of silver, copper, and nickel. Interestingly, out of 42 Indo-Greek kings, 34 are known solely through their coins.

- The high number of kings within a brief period suggests concurrent reigns, indicating the likelihood of two Greek dynasties ruling North-western India simultaneously.

Demetrius (King of Bactria):

- He invaded India in 190 BCE and most likely clashed with Pushyamitra Shunga.
- He conquered a significant portion of the Mauryan empire in North-western India, extending Bactrian control south of the Hindu Kush.

Menander/Milinda/Minedra (160 BCE - 120 BCE):

- He was the most renowned Indo-Greek emperor, who not only established Indo-Greek supremacy but also expanded his empire's borders in India.
- His empire seems to have comprised sections of both **Bactria and North-western India**, as well as **southern Afghanistan and Gandhara** (the region west of the Indus River).
- He established his capital at **Sakala (modern Sialkot, Punjab)**, and it is believed that he also invaded and captured the **Ganga-Yamuna doab**, but did not hold it for long.
- He has been identified as the King Milinda referenced in the famous Buddhist work **Milindapanho (Question of Milinda-Written in Pali Text)**, which comprises philosophical inquiries that Milinda asked **Nagasena** (the Buddhist author of the text). According to the story, the king accepted Buddhism as his faith after being inspired by the answers.
- He is also linked with King Minedra, who is referenced in a fragmented Kharosthi inscription discovered on a casket in **Bajaur (now in Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province).** These inscriptions refer to the enshrining of Buddha relics, most likely in a stupa, during his reign.

Hermaius (Last ruler of the dynasty)

- He was defeated by the Parthians in the last quarter of the second century BCE, effectively ending Greek authority in Bactria and the area south of the Hindu Kush.

However, it should be emphasised that Indo-Greek control lasted a little longer in northeastern India. There is mention of **Queen Agathokleia** (possibly one of Menander I's queens) and her son **Strato**, whose joint coinage has been discovered. This northwest Gandhara territory was eventually lost to the Parthians and Shakas.

Later, in the late first century BCE or early first century CE, the final remaining part of their kingdom, the land east of the Jhelum, was likewise handed to the **Kshatrapa monarch Rajuvula.**

Impact of Indo-Greek Rule

- **Coins:** The Indo-Greeks were **the first monarchs in India to produce coins** (gold, silver, copper, and nickel) that could be traced back to any dynasty, and they were also the first to mint gold coins in India (which rose in number during the Kushanas).
  - Surprisingly, the Shakas, Parthians, and Kshatrapas' coins retained the core traits of Indo-Greek currency, such as multilingual and bi-script legends.
  - Indo-Greek coins were miniatures of aesthetic excellence, accurate economic value, and vital information about burgeoning religious sects and cults (particularly the **Shaiva and Bhagvata sects**) that were dominant in that area.

Eucratides I (o.); the Dioscuri (r.)
Hippostratus (o.); king on horse (r.)
Hermaeus with wife Calliope (o.); king on horse (r.)
Menander (o.); goddess Pallas (r.)

Fig. 8.3: Indo-Greek Coins

- Coinage was also modified according to geography and need. For Instance:

The Indo-Greek coins, which circulated to the north of the Hindu Kush	The Indo-Greek coins, which circulated to the south of the Hindu Kush
They were made of gold, silver, copper, and nickel	They were often square in shape and made of silver and copper.
They had Greek tales and used the Attic weight standard.	The inscriptions were bilingual in Greek and Kharoshthi (occasionally in Brahmi) and followed an Indian weight standard.
They had royal portraits on the obverse and pictures of Greek deities (such as Zeus, Apollo, and Athena) on the reverse, as well as the king's name and title.	The obverse side features a royal image, whereas the reverse side features religious symbolism inspired by India rather than Greece.

- **Art and Culture:** They introduced new elements of Hellenistic art and literature, such as **Gandhara art** in India's North-western frontier, which was not completely Greek but rather the result of intermingling and influence from both Indian and Central Asian contacts.
  - **Heliodorus' inscription on the Besnagar Pillar** is a noteworthy example of this mixture.
  - On the subcontinent, new names influenced by the Greek language began to be used. For example, the Sanskrit term **'horshastra'** for astrology is derived from the Greek word **'horoscope'**.
- The Hellenistic Greeks are also noted for their massive structures and exquisitely manufactured artefacts. Excavations at **Ai-Khanoum** (placed at the confluence of the Oxus and the Kokcha of modern Balkh), **Antioch, and Sirkap** at Taxila demonstrate a great ability for urban planning.
- Indo-Greeks promoted the growth of **trade and commerce.** The Indo-Greeks were good traders and were referred to as **Yavana-gandhikas** (foreign perfume dealers).
- Indo-Greeks contributed to engineering through the **construction of canals and dams**.
- They also contributed to the growth of medicine and astronomy.
- The Indo-Greeks also established **military governership** (the governors were known as **strategos/satraps**).
- Indo-Greeks are credited with the introduction of **curtains** in India.

The Shakas/Scythians

- Shaka is the Indian word for the **Scythians**, who were originally from Central Asia. Interestingly, Patanjali refers to the Shakas as **'Anirvasita** (pure) **Shudras'** in his **Mahabhasya**. The Greeks were followed to India by the Shakas, who dominated a considerably greater territory than the Greeks.
- As previously discussed, the decline of the Greek kingdoms began in the late second century BCE. The Seleucid empire in the north-west coincided with an attack on Bactria by nomadic tribal groups from Central Asia, namely the **Hsiungnu/ Xiongnu, Wu-sun, and Yueh-chis** (tribe stock to whom the Kushanas also belonged).

Fig. 8.4: Indo Scythian Kingdom

- The **Hsiang-nu** are thought to have faced hunger in the first century BCE as a result of abundant snow and constant attacks by their neighbours. This resulted in their relocation and the displacement of the Yueh-Chis, who were driven off their best lands and forced to migrate to remote locations.
- The **Yueh-Chis** were further divided into two branches, the **Little Yueh-Chis** (who settled in northern Tibet) and the **Great Yueh-Chis** (who went further west, to the shores of the **Aral Sea** and the plains of the Syr Darya (Jaxartes), displacing the original inhabitants of that area, the Scythians/Shakas).
- The Shakas pushed their way into Bactria, Parthia, and the Indus plains. The Shakas were divided into five branches, each with their own seat of power in different parts of India and Afghanistan:
  - One Shaka branch settled in **Afghanistan**. **Vonones and Spalirises** were prominent kings of this branch.
  - The second branch established itself in **Punjab, with Taxila as its capital. Maues** was a powerful ruler.
  - The third branch settled in **Mathura** and ruled for over two centuries. **Azilises** was a powerful ruler.
  - The fourth branch took control of **Western India,** which they dominated until the fourth century CE.
    - They governed for the longest time because Gujarat had a thriving economy based on sea-borne trade and hence issued a significant quantity of silver coins.
    - **Rudradaman I** was a notable emperor who descended from the **Shaka Kshatrapas** of Western Indian ancestry.
  - The fifth Shaka branch established its authority in the upper **Deccan**.

Fig. 8.5: Chronology of Dynasty

- These complicated migrations and movements of people from central Asia had a ripple effect on the polity of the Indian subcontinent.
- The history of Shaka rule is primarily documented in inscriptions and coinage. Vonones (the first autonomous Parthian monarch of eastern Iran) can be traced through coinage, as can **Spalirises, Azes I, Azilises, and Azes II**.
  - Some coins even allude to the use of the conjoined rule. Spalirises and Azes I, for example, were most likely co-rulers, as were Azes I and Azilises.

Important Shaka Rulers:

- **Maues/Moga/Moa (c. 80 BCE):**
  - He was most likely the first Shaka king in India to achieve authority in **Gandhara**.
  - A Shaka king, **Moga**, and his kshatrapa/satrap (administrator), **Patika**, are mentioned in an inscription discovered at **Taxila**. His name was also on various copper and silver coins. His coins depicted common Indian goddesses such as **Abhisheka Laxmi.**
- **Azes:**
  - The kingdom of the last Indo-Greek king, **Hippostratos,** in northern India was successfully seized.
  - He is also linked to the Vikram Samvat era of 58 BCE, which is used to commemorate Azes' accession. This era was previously associated with a Ujjain monarch named **Vikramaditya's** victory over the Shakas. When all other Indian monarchs fell in front of the Shakas, it is thought that Vikramaditya effectively fought against them, and **'Vikramaditya'** became a prized title, much like **'Caesar'** for Romans.

The Shakas and Scytho-Parthians controlled the empire through **kshatrapas** (governors) or mahakshatrapas (subordinate rulers), who played an important role in the empire's expansion. For example, during the reign of the Scytho-Parthian emperor Azilises, a kshatrapa

Rajuvula played an important role in his empire's eastward development.

Decline of Shaka Dynasty:

- **Rajuvula** later assumed the title of **mahakshatrapa** and ruled as an **independent ruler** of the **Mathura** territory until his son **Sodasha** succeeded to the Mathura throne.
- Notably, these kshatrapas had a more independent status than was typical for an administrative governor, as they could not only issue their own inscriptions in whatever era they desired, but they could also mint their coins.
  - A **meridarch** was another official title for an officer-in-charge of a specific area.

The Scytho-Parthians/Shaka-Pahlavas

The Parthians followed the Shakas' dominance in north-west India in the mid-first century CE; however, they occupied a very minor area of the region in contrast to the Greeks and the Shakas. They are referred to as the **Shaka-Pahlavas** in several ancient Sanskrit scriptures. Surprisingly, both reigned concurrently for a while.

- The title Shaka-Pahlava/Scytho-Parthians refers to various groups of invaders who arrived from **Parthia** in North-west India in the first century CE.
- The Parthians originated in **Iran** and invaded India around the start of the Christian era.
- **Gondophernes/Guduvhara** (recorded on an inscription dated 45 CE excavated from **Mardan in Peshawar**) was the most famous and important Parthian king, and it was during his reign that **St. Thomas** came to India to spread Christianity.
  - The Parthians, like the Shakas, were eventually incorporated into Indian society and formed a vital part of it. The Kushanas eventually drove the successors of Gondophernes out of North-western India.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

In the context of present-day regional governance, discuss the lessons that can be derived from the administration of the Shakas/Scythians in ancient India. Explore how understanding historical regional dynamics can inform strategies for cooperative federalism and inclusive development in a diverse nation.

The Kushanas

The Kushanas, also known as **Yueh-Chis (Moon tribe) or Tocharians**, were one of the five clans (Kuei-shang) that comprised the Yue-chi tribe. They were a **nomadic tribal people** who originated in the **North Central Asian steppes**. The Kushanas first took **Bactria** (or north Afghanistan), displacing the Shakas, and then gradually seized **Gandhara**, supplanting the Greek and Parthian dominance in these areas. They eventually established their rule over the lower Indus River and a large portion of the Gangetic basin.

Their dominion stretched from the **Oxus to the Ganga rivers**, from **Khorasan** in Central Asia to **Varanasi** in Uttar Pradesh (almost the size of nine contemporary countries).

Kujula Kadphises/Kadphises I (15 CE – 64 CE)

- He united the five clans of the Yue-chi tribe and laid the groundwork for a unified Kushana empire.
- He struck copper coins and is thought to have copied Roman **'aurei'** type coins to improve trade.
- His coinage has been discovered south of the Hindu Kush, implying that during his reign, the Kushanas likely began their migration towards the Indian subcontinent.
- His coins also allude to a connection with Buddhism.
- He took the names **'dharmathida' and 'sachadharmathida'.**

Vima Kadphises/Wema Kadphises II (64 CE–78 CE)

- He was the son of Kadphises I and began as a co-ruler with his father for a time before ruling independently.
- He took Gandhara from the Parthians and expanded the kingdom east of the Indus to the Mathura region. Kanishka's rule was politically significant since he united central Asia and north India as part of a single empire. It resulted in the mixing of diverse cultures and a rise in inter-regional trade.
- **Shaivite:** He was a **Shiva** fanatic who declared himself as **'Mahishvara'** on his coinage.
  - All of his coins (gold and copper) bear the recognisable symbol of Shiva with his trident bull.

Kanishka (78 CE–101 CE)

- He was the son of Kadphises II and the most famous Kushana king, during whose reign the Kushana empire reached its pinnacle.
- The Empire during his reign spread from Central Asia to Afghanistan and North-western India, then east into the Ganga valley and south into the **Malwa** area, with **Varanasi, Kaushambi, and Shravasti** in Uttar Pradesh and Sanchi in Madhya Pradesh being part of it.
- **Bactria** was the core of this vast kingdom, as evidenced by the use of the **Bactrian language on Kanishka's coins** and inscriptions.
- The famous **Rabatak** Inscription (located in contemporary **Baghran** province, **Afghanistan**) contains important information about Kanishka.

The Rabatak Inscription

The 1993 archaeological discovery at Kafir's Castle in Rabatak, Afghanistan, revealed a stone slab with a 23-line inscription detailing Kanishka's reign, rectifying historical misconceptions, and providing valuable insights into the Kushana Empire's rulers, religious practices and influence.

- He adopted the title of **'Devputra'**, and has been shown wearing a **'peaked helmet'** on several coins.
- Kanishka had two capitals:
  - **Purushapura (present-day Peshawar)**, where he built a massive stupa to store the Buddha's remains. When the Chinese pilgrim **Fa-Hien** visited the area later in the early fifth century CE, the edifice was there in its whole.
  - **Mathura**
- He is remembered for two key reasons:
  - He started the **Shaka period (78 CE),** which is acknowledged as the start of his rule and is now utilised by the Government of India for its calendar. The most likely explanation for why the name Shaka era and not Kushana era was used is that either Kanishka was mistakenly considered a Shaka or the era was in continuous use throughout the reigns of the Shakas kshatrapas of Western India, who acknowledged the Kushanas' overlordship.
  - The fourth Buddhist council was held at **Kundalavana (near Srinagar in Jammu and Kashmir)** under the leadership of **Vasumitra**. Kanishka was a big supporter of Buddhism.
    - During this meeting, Buddhism was divided into two schools: the **Hinayana and the Mahayana**.
    - According to mythology, it was **Parsva**, a Buddhist monk, who advised Kanishka to convene the fourth Buddhist Council.
- He patronised great scholars and eminent personalities of that era, such as:
  - **Ashvagosha**: A Buddhist scholar who created the **Saundarananda** (a Sanskrit kavya) and wrote the hagiographic **Buddhacharita** (the sacred biography of the Buddha).
  - **Charaka**: Known as the **father of Ayurveda**, he wrote the **Charaksamhita**, a book on **medicine**, as well as the **Sasruta**.
  - **Vasumitra**: A famous philosopher who wrote the Buddhist philosophy encyclopaedia **Mahavibhasa**.
  - **Nagarjuna**: He is often referred to as an **Indian Einstein** because he proposed the **Theory of Relativity in the form of a Sutra,** the **Prajnaparamita** Sutra, during his lifetime.
    - He was also a strong advocate of the Mahayana ideology and the **Madhyamaka** (also known as the **Sunyavada** School), which concentrates on sunyata, or emptiness.
  - **Mathara**: He was a minister known for his remarkable intelligence.
  - **Agesilaus**: A Greek engineer who, it is said, oversaw the construction of **Purushapura's** enormous stupa.
- Kanishka also supported the **Gandhara and Mathura sculptural schools**. A headless statue of Kanishka showing him as a warrior was discovered in Mathura.
- He controlled the well-known Silk Road in Central Asia.
  - **China → Central Asia → Afghanistan → Iran → Western Asia (part of the Roman Empire)**
- Kanishka's religious tolerance was another striking aspect of his personality, as the king's coinage depicts motifs drawn from a wide range of religious traditions:
  - Indian (the motifs of **Shiva and the Buddha),**
  - Greek (motifs of Greek deities such as **Helios**, a sun god, and **Selene**, moon goddess), and
  - West Asian (motifs of **Persian gods Atas**h, fire god, and **Mithra**, sun god).
- It is indicated that near the end of his long reign, he undertook an ineffective military expedition into Central Asia against the Chinese, was beaten by General **Pan-chao**, and was compelled to pay tribute to Chinese Emperor **Ho-ti.**

Vasudeva II (the last Kushana Emperor)

- Kanishka's immediate successors were **Vasishka, Huvishka, Kanishka II** (who acquired the title of **'Kaiser'**), and **Vasudeva I,** who assumed the title **Shaono Shao Vasudevo Koshano** during his reign around the mid-2nd century CE, indicating that the Kushanas had been completely Indianised by this time.
- It was during his rule that the empire began to decline. The names of these monarchs, as well as those of different kshtatrapas and mahakshtrapas, may be found on a number of **Kharoshthi** inscriptions on a big rock at **Hunza** (between the **Karakoram highway and the Hunza river**).

Decline of Kushanas:

- Since the early third century CE, Kushana's power has gradually collapsed. In the mid-third century CE, the **Sassanian Empire (of Iran)** superseded the Kushana Empire in Afghanistan and the territory west of the Indus.
- However, some Kushana remains remained in the Kabul Valley, **Kapisa**, and Bactria until the 4th century. The decline of the Kushanas resulted in the reemergence of multiple polities of both monarchs and Ganas in various parts of north India (as evidenced by coins, seals, and inscriptions), including:
  - The **Shaka Kshatrapas** in western and central India.
  - The **Arjunayanas** live in **Bharatpur and Alwar.**
  - The **Malavas** are found in Punjab and certain parts of neighbouring Rajasthan.
  - The **Yaudheya Gana** is located in eastern Punjab and extends into Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan.
  - The **Naga Kings of Padmavati** (associated with Pawaya in modern Gwalior district, MP).

THE SHAKA KSHATRAPAS OF WESTERN INDIA

The Syctho-Parthian monarchs were known as kshatrapas (viceroys) and mahakshatrapas (subordinate rulers). There

were two prominent lines of kshatrapa monarchs in the early centuries CE: the Kshaharatas and the Kardamakas, who held sway over regions of western India during and after the Kushana period.

The Kshatrapas

The prominent rulers belonging to this dynasty included:

Bhumaka (around 78 CE)

- Originally dedicated to Kanishka.
- His coins, which bear legends in Brahmi and Kharoshthi, have been discovered in Malwa, the Ajmer region, and coastal Gujarat.

Nahapana (119-125 CE)

- He rose through the ranks from kshatrapa to mahakshatrapa, and finally to Rajan (king).
- His kingdom, which covered **Malwa, Gujarat, Saurashtra, northern Maharashtra, and sections of Rajasthan** and the lower Indus Valley, most likely had its capital at **Minnagara (modern Doha, located between Ujjain and Broach**).
  - In the Pune district, an inscription of one of his **amatyas, Aryaman** was discovered.
- His coins were discovered in **Ajmer, Rajasthan, and Nashik, Maharashtra.** Some of his memorial inscriptions have been discovered in the Maharashtra caves of Nashik and Karle.
- The Shaka Kshatrapas are thought to have been in constant war with the Satavahanas over suzerainty over the Deccan, with sovereignty over the western seaport districts regularly changing hands.
  - For example, the Nashik and Pune territories appear to have been acquired by Nahapana or his Satavahana predecessors.
- Later, in about 125 CE, Nahapana is thought to have been assassinated by the Satavahana emperor, **Gautamiputra Satkarni**, who not only restruck Nahapana's coins but also recounted his triumph over Nahapana in inscriptions in the Nashik and Pune areas. This triumph is also referenced in his mother's inscription, **Gautami Balashri**.
- According to one inscription, **Ushavadata** (Nahapana's son-in-law) granted Buddhist monks a field for nourishment.

The Bhadramukhas or Kardamakas

The Kardamakas are a branch of the Shaka kshatrapas that controlled western India after the end of the Kshaharata dynasty. Among the important monarchs of this dynasty were:

Chashtana (130-152 CE)

- He was the founder of the Kardamaka dynasty. Chashtana ascended the throne in 78 CE. He reigned over Ujjain as a Shaka monarch of the western Kshatrapas dynasty. The Shaka era is thought to have begun with his ascent to power in 78 CE. He was a contemporary of King Nahapana and declared himself king in Gujarat.
- The Kardamakas used senior (mahakshatrapa) and junior (kshatrapas) rulers. For example, during **Chashtana's** (the mahakshatrapa's) lifetime, his son **Jayadaman** and, later, his grandson **Rudradaman I** were kshatrapas.
- His grandson, Rudradaman I, succeeded him as the most prominent ruler of his dynasty.

Rudradaman I (130 CE–152 CE)

- The most well-known of the Shaka kshtarapa monarchs ruled in the mid-second century CE.
- Except for the Nashik and Pune districts, his kingdom spanned practically the whole western Indian subcontinent, including **Sindh, Gujarat, Konkan, Narmada Valley, Malwa, and Kathiawar**.
- He is remembered in history for the improvements he made to the **Sudarshan Lake** during Chandragupta Maurya's reign, which is located in the semi-arid zone of Kathiawar, and this effort is documented in the renowned **Junagarh or Girnar Inscription** (dated in the Shaka year 72, i.e., 150-151 CE).
  - This inscription is the **first chaste Sanskrit royal inscription** of early India, while all others were written in Prakrit.

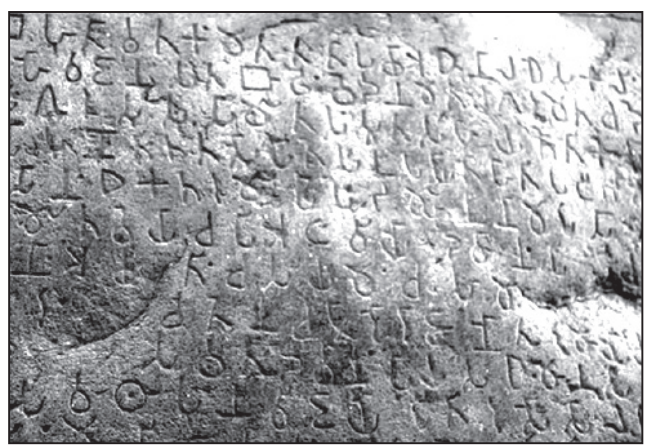


Fig. 8.6: Junagadh Inscription of Rudradaman I

- This inscription also describes his other accomplishments. According to the inscription, he vanquished Gautamiputra Satkarni, the lord of the Dakshinapatha, twice but did not destroy him because he was a close relative.
- **Vasishthiputra Pulumavi,** the son of Gautamiputra Satakarni, married Rudradaman's daughter.
- Vishvasena (The last Kshatrapa ruler of the Chashtana lineage who ruled at the end of the third century BCE)

IGNITE YOUR MIND

Investigate the economic impact of ancient trade routes connecting India with Rome, Southeast Asia, and China. How does this historical trade network draw parallels with modern-day globalization?

The Impact and Contribution of Contacts with Central Asia

The Shaka-Kushana period provided numerous new components to trade and agriculture, administrative organisation, art and literature, sculpture and pottery, science and technology, and Indian society as a whole. In fact, Central Asian influence may be found in practically every element of social life. For instance:

- **Ceramics in architecture:** They pioneered the use of burnt bricks for flooring and tiles for both flooring and roofing. The period is distinguished by the construction of brick walls. Red pottery techniques, which were popular in Central Asia, were also utilised on the Indian Subcontinent.
  - This period's pottery was red clay, both plain and polished, with medium to fine fabric. Sprinklers and spouted channels were popular pots during this time period.
- **Trade and Agriculture**: Trade between Central Asia and India grew as a result of the formation of personal links between the two regions. India imported a significant amount of gold from Central Asia's **Altai Highlands.** Due to the Kushanas' significant control of the Silk Route, the Kushanas' economy was refreshed by tolls placed on traders, and this wealth aided in the construction of a huge prosperous empire.
  - It is worth noting that, while the Indo-Greeks were the first to introduce gold money into India, the Kushanas were the first monarchs in India to issue gold coins on a large scale. Agriculture was also emphasised by the Kushanas. The Kushanas are thought to have been the forerunners in initiating and expanding large-scale irrigation.
- **Military Skills and Equipment:** The Shakas and Kushanas, both outstanding riders, introduced improved cavalry and popularised horseback riding on a vast scale. They popularised the use of rope reins, saddles, and toe-stirrups, which aided the rider's movement. They also brought in warrior's headgear, helmets, and boots.
  - The Shakas and Kushanas popularised new clothing designs such as the turban, tunic, pants, heavy long coats, and long boots, which were embraced not just by the warrior classes but also by various other segments of society. The practise of producing leather shoes most likely began in India during this time period.
- **Administrative Organisation:** The Central Asian conquerors established new administrative styles. For example, the Indo-Greeks established the practise of military governorship, appointing military governors known as strategos, whereas the Kushanas established the 'Satrap' system of government, in which the empire was divided into numerous satrapis, each of which was ruled by a satrap.
  - These systems resulted in the formation of a feudatory organisation in which these Central Asian invaders maintained their control over several petty kings who paid them regular tributes. The Shakas and Kushanas bolstered the belief in the **divine origins of kingship.** They adopted the appellation 'Deviputra,' which means "sons of God."
- **Indian Society**: One of the most impressive aspects of the Central Asian invaders was that they not only blended with Indian society, but they also added new ingredients to Indian culture, greatly enriching it. They were thoroughly immersed in Indian culture. They borrowed these cultural components from India because they did not have their own alphabet, written language, or organised religion. It is not incorrect to say that no other period in ancient history saw such a vast number of foreigners adapt to Indian society as the post-Maurya period. Because the majority of them arrived as conquerors, they were assimilated as Kshatriyas.
  - Even in the Manusmriti, Manu describes the Shakas and Parthians as vratya-kshatriyas (second-class kshatriyas) who had departed from their sacrificial ritual responsibilities and so fallen in status.

Ancient kings in India, influenced by Central Asian cultures, embraced diverse religions. Notably, Greek figures like Heliodorus and Menander adopted Vaishnavism and Buddhism, respectively. Kushana emperors, including worshippers of Shiva and Buddha, featured these deities on coins. Central Asian impact spurred changes in Mahayana Buddhism; monks accepted wealth, consumed non-vegetarian food, and adorned elaborate attire due to financial support from traders. Some monks abandoned monastic life, and Buddha's emblems were replaced with images in this modified Buddhism, known as Mahayana. Kanishka, a prominent supporter, organized the fourth Buddhist Council and erected stupas to honor Buddha, which marked the rise of Mahayana. This era highlighted distinctions between the Mahayana and Hinayana schools of thought.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

Discuss the societal integration of Central Asian invaders into Indian culture during the post-Maurya period. Relate this to contemporary discussions on multiculturalism and the challenges and benefits of preserving cultural diversity in the face of globalization.

Difference between Hinayana and Mahayana

Hinayana	Mahayana
❑ It believes that the highest objective of human life should be to achieve nibbana/Nirvana and become an arhat.	❑ It regards nibbana as a secondary aim, with the higher objective being to pursue the path of a Bodhisattva and reach Buddhahood.

❑ They define an **arhat** as someone who, after obtaining nibbana, leaves the cycle of samsara.	❑ According to them, a Bodhisattva is someone who has gained profound wisdom but chooses to postpone his nibbana in order to help others become Buddhas. ❑ The ten virtues of **dana** (generosity), **shila** (good behaviour), **kshanti** (patient patience), **virya** (mental strength), **dhyana** (meditation), **prajna** (wisdom), **upayakaushalya** (skillfulness in methods), pranidhana (determination), bala (power), and **jnana** (knowledge) should be present in the Bodhisattva.
❑ In Hinayana, the Buddha is seen as a mahapurusha (superior man), the unrivalled teacher par excellence who attained enlightenment and became an arhat.	❑ The Mahayana widened the gap between being an arhat and becoming a Buddha. It presented the concept of transcendent Buddhas and Bodhisattvas as intermediaries between nibbana and samsara. It gave birth to several Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, including Maitreya, Avalokiteshvara, and Manjushri, all of whom assisted others in their various Buddha-kshetras.

❑ **Art:** Post-Mauryan art was largely religious. The construction of stupas and the growth of regional schools of sculpture are two of the most prominent aspects of this period's art and architecture.

- **Stupas:**
  - ❒ They are large hemispherical domes with a central chamber containing relics of the Buddha or a Buddhist monk in a tiny casket. The base was surrounded by a path for pradakshina (clockwise circumambulation), which was later replaced with stone fences.
  - ❒ Three prominent stupas of this period are at **Bharhut (**which dates to the middle of the second century BCE and is significant for its sculptures; its railings are made of red stone), **Sanchi** (three big stupas were constructed at Sanchi in this period; the biggest of the three, which was built originally by Emperor Ashoka, was enlarged to twice its size sometime in the second century BCE), and **Amravati and Nagarjunkonda** (both in Andhra Pradesh).
  - ❒ Several stupas were also built in south India during this time period, although none have survived in their entirety.
- **Sculptural Art Schools:** For the first time, Buddha idols were carved out during this period. The Central Asian monarchs were passionate patrons of Indian art and literature, and they worked hard to establish new art schools. During this time period, three significant schools of sculptural art emerged. Gandhara School of Art, Mathura School of Art, and Amravati School of Art were among them.

❑ **Different Schools of Arts:** The Kushana kingdom brought together masons and artisans trained in different art styles who belonged to different nations, which further enriched the diverse cultures. There was a blending of both local (Indian) and Central Asian components in the new depictions of Buddha.

Fig. 8.7: Gandhara Sculpture

- **Gandhara School of Art:** Indian craftspeople came into contact with the central Asians, Greeks, and Romans, especially at the north-western boundary of India in Gandhara. This gave rise to a new kind of art form known as the Gandhara school of art, wherein the theme of sculptures is largely Buddhist but their style is Greek.
  - ❒ The chief qualities of the Gandhara school of art are its stunning portrayal of human forms with distinguished muscles of the body. The Buddha is shown with a gown draped in Graeco-Roman fashion and with highly curly hair.
  - ❒ These exquisite representations of the Buddha are rated among the best pieces of sculpture to have been recovered. The stone used for creating idols of Buddha and Bodhisattva was largely blue-grey schist.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

Highlight the Central Asian and Greco-Bactrian elements in Gandhara art. Gandhara sculpture owed as much to the Romans as to the Greeks. Explain.

- **Mathura School of Art:** The influence of Gandhara art also expanded to Mathura, which was primarily the centre of an indigenous school of painting. The

Mathura artists used native red stone with black dots to make the images.

- Mathura has also given enormous numbers of sculptures of Jaina deities besides the **ayagapatas**, or stone slabs, to set objects of worship. The Brahmanical influence on the art school of Mathura is also visible.
- During the Kushana period, a variety of sculptures of Brahmanical deities were carved, which included Kartikeya, Vishnu, and Kubera. Mathura not only produced stunning stone images of Buddha and Mahavira, but it is also famous for the headless, erect figure of Kanishka.
- A lot of stone sculptures belonging to both the Gandhara and Mathura schools of art were produced in the Kushana period and form a part of the great cultural heritage of India.

Fig. 8.8: Seated Buddha with attendants, Mathura art

- **Amaravati School of Art:** In Andhra Pradesh, in the lower valleys of the rivers Krishna and Godavari, the Amravati style of art flourished. The Satavahanas were the primary sponsors of this art genre, although it continued even later, under the patronage of their succeeding Ikshavaku monarchs.
  - This art school is claimed to have thrived between 150 BCE and 350 CE. This school's sculptures are mostly seen on stupa railings, plinths, and other elements. Thematic depictions include stories from the Buddha's life. The **'narrative art'** is an important feature of the Amravati school.
  - The medallions were carved in such a way that they depicted a natural incident. One medallion, for example, portrays the 'taming of an elephant by the Buddha'. Another distinguishing aspect of Amravati art is the carving of the figures in white marble-like stone. There is a greater emphasis on human figures than on natural figures.

Fig. 8.9: Narrative Amaravati Sculpture

- **Literature**: Central Asian kings also supported and aided the expansion of Sanskrit literature. The Junagadh Inscription of Rudradaman I contains the first example of kavya style in chaste Sanskrit.
  - The Kushanas supported some of the greatest creative authors, like Ashvaghosha. This time produced some of the most important Buddhist scriptures, including Mahavastu and Divyavadana.
  - The development of Mahayana Buddhism resulted in the writing of several avadanas, which were written in Buddhist hybrid Sanskrit and attempted to popularise the Mahayana sect.
  - The Greeks helped to the development of Indian theatre by introducing the curtain, known as yavanika.
  - Vatsyayana wrote the Kamasutra, one of the earliest sensual works on sex and love making, during this time period, and it is also one of the best examples of secular writing from this period.
- **Science and Technology:** Post-Mauryan Indian astronomy and astrology is heavily influenced by Greek culture. The Sanskrit term **'horashastra'** for astrology was borrowed from the Greek phrase **'horoscope'**. The Greek coins, which were properly fashioned and stamped, far outperformed punch marked coins.
  - The Kushanas produced the greatest amount of copper coins. Working in glass-making during this period was highly impacted by foreign practises, and **glass-making** made more development than at any previous time in ancient India.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

Reflect on the contributions of the Indo-Greeks in terms of cross-cultural exchanges and technological advancements. Explore how modern nations can benefit from international collaboration in areas such as trade, technology, and the arts, fostering innovation and global development.

THE SATAVAHANAS

The Satavahanas, also known as the **Andhras**, ruled the Deccan for about 450 years after the decline of the Mauryas. Notable rulers include **Simuka, Krishna, and Gautamiputra Satakarni.** Their history is gleaned from inscriptions, coins, and texts like Hala's Gathasaptasati. In the next chapter, we will delve into a detailed study of the Satavahanas, exploring their reigns, achievements, and cultural contributions.

EARLY HISTORY OF SOUTH INDIA

The Megalithic Background of South India

The pre-historic period (the pre-writing phase) is usually followed by the historical period, which is distinguished by the beginning of writing and written literature, more settled and stable community life, agriculture with iron ploughshares, the gradual rise of the state system, the use of metal money, a flourishing economy, and so on. However, until around the 2nd century BCE, all of these phenomena did not appear in a linear form in southern India, particularly at the tip of the peninsula with the Kaveri delta as the nucleus zone.

- **Tools and Burials:** The Neolithic period in south India was followed by the Megalithic period (about 1200 BCE-300 BCE), which was distinguished by the use of polished stone axes and blade implements. The top reaches of the peninsula were inhabited by people known as Megalith builders.
  - Surprisingly, these people are identified not by their real towns, which are few, but by their tombs. These burials are known as Megaliths because they were surrounded by mega/large stones and were usually positioned outside of the settlement area.
    - The inhabitants of the southern districts of Tamil Nadu during this period exhibited distinctive characteristics. They practiced urn burials, interring the skeletons of the deceased in urns crafted from red pottery and placed in pits.
    - Unlike other regions where stone circles surrounded burial sites, many of these urns were not encircled by stones, and the accompanying grave goods were relatively scarce.
  - The first iron objects from south India were discovered at these Megalith burial sites (including **arrowheads, daggers, swords, spearheads, tridents, battle axes, hoes, ploughshares, sickles**, and so on).
- **Artefacts and Lifestyle:** Aside from them, a large amount of **black and red ware pottery** has been discovered buried in these Megaliths.
  - These artefacts, along with food grains such as wheat and rice discovered at various Megalithic sites, indicate that the Megalithic people relied on **agropastoral and hunting** activities for a living.
  - They did not practise advanced agriculture, as the number of agricultural tools discovered in grave sites is less than that of fighting and hunting tools.
- **Region and Sites:** These megaliths have been discovered throughout the peninsula's uplands, with a **concentration in eastern Andhra and Tamil Nadu**.
  - Megalithic burials have been discovered at **Brahmagiri, Maski (Karnataka), Adichallanur (Tamilnadu), and Junapani near Nagpur (Maharashtra).**

The Cholas, Pandyas, and Keralaputras (Cheras) described in the Ashokan inscriptions most likely belonged to the final phase of Megalithic culture. The Sangam age succeeded the Megalithic period in south India.

History of Sangam Age in greater detail is dealt with in Chapter 10.

CONCLUSION

Between 200 BCE and 300 CE, the Indian sub-continent witnessed significant political and urban development. The era saw the establishment of diverse political structures, introducing shared rule, enhanced royal prestige, and hierarchical arrangements with subordinate rulers. Various bases for royal legitimation emerged, including sponsorship of Brahmanas, religious establishments, and Vedic rituals. This period marked a surge in cities, specialized products, and commercial networks. Religious practices thrived with doctrinal discussions and devotional worship, leading to the institutionalization of religious groups and the construction of permanent religious buildings. The cultural richness of the time is evident in sophisticated architectural and sculptural styles. Contributions and donations from diverse groups, driven by religious conviction and a desire to affirm social or political status, played a pivotal role in fostering cultural vibrancy.

The Satavahanas

9

As previously discussed, the **Maurya** rule in northern India was succeeded by the **Shungas** and the **Kanvas**. However, the Deccan and central part of India witnessed a different historical narrative, with the Satavahanas emerging after a gap of nearly 100 years following the decline of the Mauryas.

The archaeological evidence of various local rulers' coins, such as the kura rulers in Brahmapuri, suggests the existence of numerous small political principalities in the Deccan post the Mauryan era. It is hypothesized that entities like the **Rathikas** and **Bhojikas** mentioned in Ashokan inscriptions evolved into the **Maharathis** and **maharajas** preceding the Satavahanas.

While the Satavahanas are often identified with the **'Andhras'** mentioned in the Puranas, there is a notable absence of the term **'Andhra'** in Satavahana inscriptions. Intriguingly, the Puranas make no direct reference to the Satavahanas, only acknowledging the rule of the Andhras for 300 years with their capital at **Pratishthana** (modern **Paithan**) in the **Aurangabad** district.

RISE OF THE SATAVAHANAS

- The earliest Satavahana inscriptions dated back to the 1st century BCE when they defeated the Kanvas, establishing their dominion over parts of central India.
- Contrary to expectations, the initial appearance of Satavahana kings is not in Andhra but in **North Maharashtra**, particularly in the fertile basin of the upper Godavari valley. Over time, their influence extended to Karnataka and Andhra.
- **Gandakasela and Ganjam** on the East coast were important sea ports under Satvahanas.

Competition with Shaka Kshatrapas in Western India

- The Satavahanas faced stiff competition from the **Shaka Kshatrapas** in Western India, who had entrenched themselves in the upper Deccan and western regions.
- Control over vital seaports like **Bhrigukachcha (Broach), Kalyani, and Suparaka (Sopara**) became a significant point of contention between the two powers. This rivalry shaped the geo-political landscape of ancient India during this period.

SATAVAHANAS CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

Brahmana Descent and Vedic Rituals

- The Satavahanas, asserting their Brahmana descent, actively engaged in Vedic rituals, and performed **Ashvamedha and vajapeya yajnas.**
  - This is exemplified by the **Naneghat cave inscription of Naganika** from the 1st century BCE, which highlights the significant sacrifices performed by **Satkarni I**.

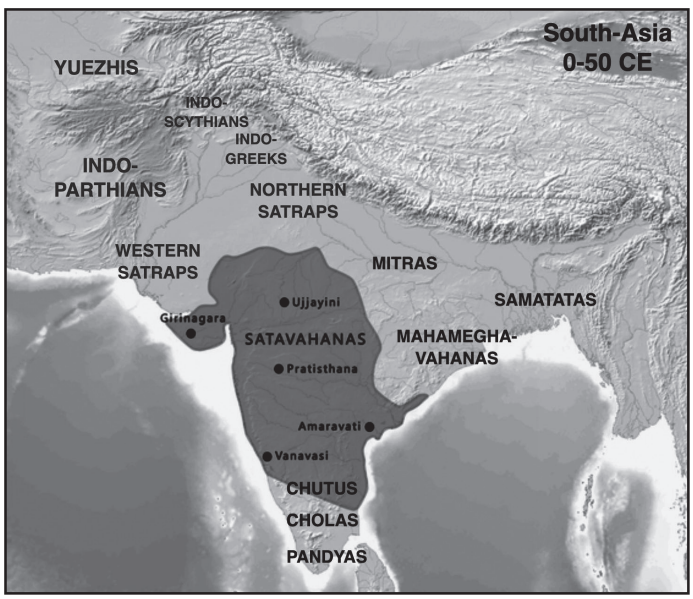


Fig. 9.1: Map of the South Asia 0 - 50 BCE

- The worship of deities such as **Krishna and Vasudeva** underscores the dynasty's adherence to Vedic traditions.

Matronyms and Lineage Signifiers

- Despite not being **matrilineal** or **matriarchal**, the Satavahanas adopted distinctive matronyms like **Gautamiputra** and **Vashishthiputra.**
- This practice, unusual for non-matrilineal societies, served as a unique identifier in the lineage of Satavahana kings.
- The Satavahanas assumed the title of **Dakshinapathapati**, signifying their authority as the lord **of the Dakshinapatha**.'
  - This title reflected their dominance over the Southern regions of India.

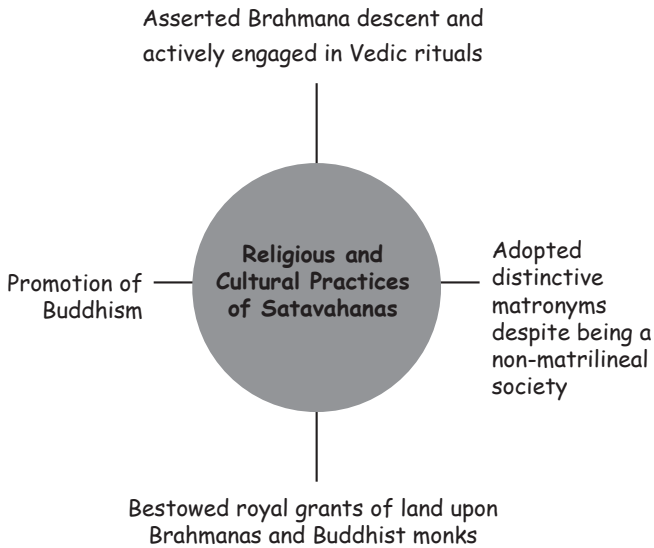

Asserted Brahmana descent and actively engaged in Vedic rituals
Religious and Cultural Practices of Satavahanas
Promotion of Buddhism
Adopted distinctive matronyms despite being a non-matrilineal society
Bestowed royal grants of land upon Brahmanas and Buddhist monks

Fig. 9.2: Religious and Cultural Practices of Satavahanas

Royal Grants and Land Endowments

- An influential aspect of Satavahana rule was their practice of bestowing royal grants of land upon Brahmanas and Buddhist monks.
  - These grants included provisions for tax exemptions.
- An inscription of **Gautamiputra Satkarni** explicitly stated that the gifted land was immune from interference by royal troops, exempt from salt extraction, free from state officials' control, and entitled to various immunities **(pariharas)**.

Promotion of Buddhism

- In addition to supporting Brahmanical traditions, the Satavahanas played a notable role in the promotion of Buddhism.
- They granted land to Buddhist monks, this dual support for both Brahmanical and Buddhist institutions showcased the dynasty's inclusive approach to religious patronage.

SIMUKA: FOUNDER OF THE SATAVAHANA DYNASTY

Simuka, the visionary founder of the Satavahana Dynasty, swiftly emerged onto the historical stage in the aftermath of Ashoka's demise. His reign marked a period of significant cultural and religious development, exemplifying a nuanced approach to spiritual diversity.

Timeline of Satavahana Kings (100 BCE – 2nd c. CE)	
Simuka	100-70 BCE
Kanha	70-60 BCE
Satakarni I	70-60 BCE
Satakarni II	50-25 BCE
Sivasvati	1st c. CE
Gautamiputra Satakarni	2nd c. CE
Vasishthiputra Pulumavi	2nd c. CE
Vashishtiputra Satakarni	2nd c. CE
Shivaskanda Satakarni	2nd c. CE
Yajna Sri Satakarni	2nd c. CE

Architect of Religious Spaces

Simuka's reign saw a remarkable architectural endeavour, with the construction of **Jain and Buddhist temples.**

This architectural patronage underscores his commitment to fostering a pluralistic religious landscape within the newly established Satavahana Dynasty.

Cultural Renaissance

- The construction of these temples during Simuka's reign catalyzed a cultural renaissance, providing space for religious expression and philosophical contemplation.
- This cultural resurgence not only enriched the spiritual fabric of the Satavahana Dynasty but also contributed to the broader ancient Indian civilization.
- His efforts to build temples for both Jain and Buddhist communities set a precedent for subsequent Satavahana rulers, emphasizing the importance of coexistence in the realm of religious practices.

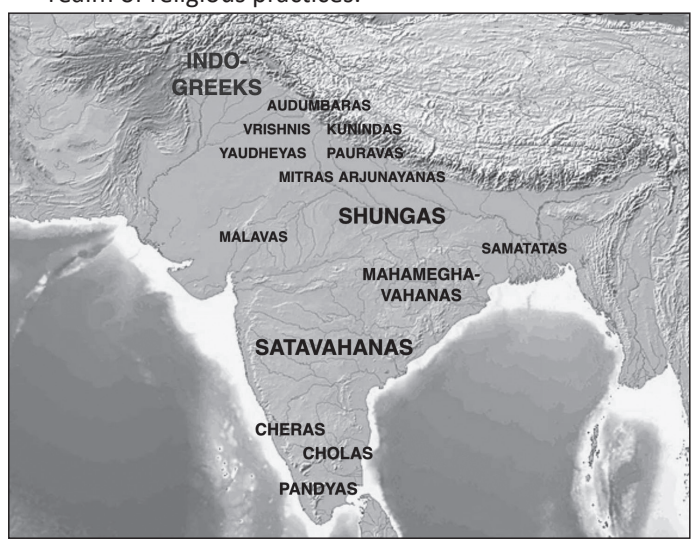


Fig. 9.3: Map of the South Asia circa 150 BCE

IGNITE YOUR MIND

In what ways does Simuka's architectural patronage of Jain and Buddhist temples in the Satavahana era offers lessons for contemporary urban planning by highlighting the role of religious monuments in fostering cultural renaissance, and how can the construction of such spaces contribute to promoting tolerance and understanding in diverse societies today?

SRI SATKARNI/ SATKARNI I (70-60 BCE)

- The third ruler of the dynasty, **Sri Satakarni or Satkarni I** conquered western Malwa and Berar. He also performed asvamedha sacrifices.

GAUTAMIPUTRA SATKARNI: THE RESURGENT RULER (C. 106–130 CE)

Initial Setbacks and Resurgence

- During the early years of Gautamiputra Satkarni's reign (c. 106–130 CE), the Shaka Kshatrapas of Western India initially succeeded in displacing the Satavahanas from the western and central regions.
  - However, the fortunes of the Satavahanas were dramatically reversed under the dynamic leadership of Gautamiputra Satkarni.
- **The defeat of Shakas and Satavahana's Zenith:** Gautamiputra Satkarni not only defeated the Shakas but also elevated the power and prestige of the Satavahanas to unprecedented heights.
  - The empire reached its pinnacle during his rule, with his influence extending from **Malwa in the north to Karnataka in the south**, encompassing the present-day Andhra region.

Destruction of Adversaries and Territorial Expansion

- Gautamiputra Satkarni claimed to have annihilated the **Kshaharata** lineage, to which his adversary **Nahapana** belonged.
  - Notably, he restored over 8000 silver coins of Nahapana under his name.
- His military prowess extended to the conquest of **Malwa and Kathiawar** from the Shakas, solidifying the territorial integrity of the Satavahana Empire.

Eulogies and Achievements

- The accomplishments of Gautamiputra Satkarni were eulogized in the **Nashik Inscription,** which was authored during the reign of his son Pulumayi II.
  - He is described as the destroyer of the **Shakas, Pahlavas, and the Yavanas** (Greeks); as the uprooter of the **Kshaharatas** and the restorer of the glory of the Satavahanas.

Cultural and Religious Contributions

- In addition to military triumphs, Gautamiputra Satkarni demonstrated a commitment to cultural and religious pluralism.
  - He donated land to the Buddhist monks, specifically the **Mahasamghikas**, at **Karle and Nashik**.
  - This benevolent act is documented in the **Karle Inscription,** showcasing his support for diverse religious traditions.

Titles and Later Challenges

- Gautamiputra Satkarni assumed the titles of **Rajaraja** and **Maharaja**, reflecting his regal authority.
  - However, in the later phase of his rule, challenges arose as he likely faced territorial losses to the **Kardamaka** line of the Shaka Kshatrapas, as evidenced in the **Junagadh Inscription of Rudradaman I.** Despite these setbacks, Gautamiputra Satkarni's legacy endures as a pivotal figure in the resurgence of the Satavahana Dynasty.

VASHISHTHIPUTRA PULUMAYI: DIPLOMATIC ALLIANCES (C. 130–154 CE)

Numismatic Presence in Andhra

- Vashishthiputra Pulumayi, reigning from c. 130 to 154 CE, left a notable imprint on the historical landscape, with his coins discovered in various parts of Andhra.
  - This widespread distribution attests to the extent of his rule and influence in the region.

Fig. 9.4: Ship on Lead Coin of Vasisthiputra Sri Pulamavi

Challenges in the East and Shaka Resurgence

- Despite his regional dominance, Vashishthiputra Pulumayi faced challenges in the east, allowing the Shaka Kshatrapas of Western India to potentially recover some of their lost territories.

Diplomatic Ties and Marital Alliance

- One intriguing aspect of Vashishthiputra Pulumayi's reign, as documented in the **Junagadh Inscription**, is his matrimonial alliance.

- According to historical records, he married the daughter of **Rudradaman I,** the ruler of the Shaka Kshatrapas.
- This matrimonial connection suggests a diplomatic strategy, possibly aimed at fostering peaceful relations or securing strategic advantages through alliances.

Regional Stability and Complex Dynamics

- Vashishthiputra Pulumayi's era is characterized by a delicate balance of regional stability and complex political dynamics.
  - While his coins scattered across Andhra affirm his authority in the region, the shifting territorial landscape in the east highlights the intricacies of power struggles and strategic manoeuvring during this period.

Legacy and Historical Significance

- The reign of Vashishthiputra Pulumayi, marked by both territorial challenges and diplomatic initiatives, contributes to the nuanced understanding of the political climate in ancient India.
- His numismatic legacy and matrimonial alliances underscore the multifaceted nature of governance and diplomacy during this crucial phase in the history of the Satavahana Dynasty.

YAJNA SRI SATAKARNI (C. 165–194 CE)

Reconquest of Territories

- Yajna Sri Satakarni, a later ruler in the Satavahana lineage reigning from c. 165 to 194 CE, distinguished himself as a formidable leader by reclaiming key territories.
  - Notably, he succeeded in recovering **north Konkan and Malwa** from the Shaka rulers, marking a significant territorial resurgence for the Satavahana Dynasty.

Trade and Navigation Enthusiast

- In addition to his military achievements, Yajna Sri Satakarni demonstrated a keen interest in trade and navigation, a facet discernible from the distinctive motifs on his coins.
- **Maritime Symbolism on Coins:** The inclusion of a ship motif on Yajna Sri Satakarni's coins speaks volumes about his economic policies and emphasis on maritime trade.
  - This visual representation signifies the importance of commerce during his reign and suggests a proactive engagement with seafaring activities and trade routes.

Economic Prosperity and Cultural Exchange

- Yajna Sri Satakarni's affinity for trade aligns with a broader vision of economic prosperity and cultural exchange.
- The encouragement of maritime commerce likely facilitated the influx of goods, ideas, and diverse influences, contributing to the enrichment of the Satavahana realm.

Historical Legacy

- The reign of Yajna Sri Satakarni, marked by both military conquests and economic pursuits, adds a layer of complexity to the historical narrative of the Satavahana Dynasty.
- His success in reclaiming territories and promoting trade underscores the multifaceted nature of governance during this period and contributes to the understanding of the dynasty's enduring impact on ancient Indian history.

LATER SATAVAHANA SUCCESSORS AND THE END OF THE DYNASTY

Successors of Yajna Sri Satakarni

- The lineage of Yajna Sri Satakarni continued through several notable successors, each leaving their mark on the trajectory of the Satavahana Dynasty.
  - Prominent among them were Gautamiputra Vijaya Satakarni, Chanda Satakarni, Vasisthiputra Vijaya Satkarni, Pulumavi, and Hala.
- Hala authored **Gatha Sattasai** in **Maharashtri Prakrit** dialect.
- Hala's dual role as both a monarch and a great poet highlights the rich cultural and intellectual tapestry of the Satavahana Dynasty.

Dynastic Decline in the Mid-3rd Century CE

- In the mid-third century CE, the Satavahana dynasty faced a culmination of challenges, leading to its eventual decline.
- This period saw the emergence of new powers in different regions of the Indian subcontinent.

Successors and Regional Powers

- As the Satavahana rule waned, various forces ascended to power in different territories.
  - The **Vakatakas** took control in the **Deccan**, the **Kadambas** asserted dominance in **Mysore**, the **Abhiras** rose to prominence in **Maharashtra**, and the **Ikshvakus** became the main rulers in Andhra.

Legacy and Historical Transition

- The end of the Satavahana Dynasty marked a significant historical transition, paving the way for the rise of diverse regional powers.
- The cultural and political contributions of the Satavahanas, as seen through the reigns of their successors, left a lasting impact on the historical narrative of ancient India.

POLITY AND ADMINISTRATION OF SATAVAHANA DYNASTY

Ideal of Kingship: Upholders of Dharma

- The Satavahana kings embraced the role of the upholder of dharma, striving to embody the royal and divine ideals outlined in the **dharmashastras**.
- To emphasize their divine connection, many kings were depicted possessing supernatural powers and qualities reminiscent of mythical heroes such as **Rama**, **Arjuna**, **Keshava** and **Bhima**.

Administrative Structure

- The administrative framework of the Satavahanas retained elements from the Ashokan era.
- The kingdom was divided into subdivisions known as **aharas or rashtras**, denoting districts.
  - Key officers, referred to as **amatyas** or **mahamatras**, likely served as ministers or advisors to the king.
- **Military and Feudal Traits:** In a departure from Mauryan practices, the Satavahanas incorporated military and feudal traits into their administration.
  - The **Senapati**, or military commander, was appointed as a provincial governor.
  - This move was likely aimed at maintaining control over tribal populations that had not undergone complete **Brahmanization**.
- **Local Administration:** At the grassroots level, the administration was organized into **gramas** (villages), each overseen by a **gaulmika**, or village headman.
  - The gaulmika also functioned as the leader of a military regiment, reflecting the intertwining of military and administrative responsibilities at the local level.

Military Character and Terminology

- The military character of the Satavahanas is evident in the use of terms like **kataka** and **skandhavaras** in inscriptions.
  - These terms refer to military camps and settlements associated with specific kings, serving both military and administrative purposes.

Feudatory System

The Satavahana kingdom operated with three grades of feudatories:

- **Raja** (with the right to strike coins),
- **Mahabhoja**, and
- **Senapati**.

This hierarchical structure helped in maintaining order and governance across the vast territory.

Revenue Collection and Land Grants

- Revenue collection in the Satavahana kingdom occurred in both cash and kind.
- Notably, the Satavahana kings were pioneers in granting tax-free land to Buddhists and Brahmanas, a strategy aimed at earning religious merit.
  - This practice of land grants for religious purposes became more prominent in subsequent periods.

The administrative policies of the Satavahanas *exemplify a blend of traditional elements from earlier dynasties with innovations tailored to the socio-political context of their time*, leaving a lasting impact on the historical evolution of ancient Indian governance.

MATERIAL CULTURE: A FUSION OF NORTH AND SOUTH INFLUENCES

Bridging North and South India

- Similar to their role as a bridge between North and South India, the material culture of the Satavahanas reflected a fusion of both local Deccan elements and northern influences.
  - Contacts with the north facilitated the adoption of various practices, including the use of **coins, burnt bricks, ringwells, and the art of writing.**

Architectural Elements

- The construction techniques employed by the Satavahanas showcased an **amalgamation of northern and local features**. Fire-baked bricks and flat, perforated roof tiles were regularly used, which contributed to the durability of structures.
  - Noteworthy discoveries, such as the 22 brick walls in **Karimnagar**, highlight the extensive use of such materials in construction.

Urban Planning and Drainage

- Satavahana urban centres displayed a sophisticated understanding of drainage systems. **Covered drains,** often underground, were designed to channel wastewater into soakage pits, demonstrating a level of urban planning and sanitation awareness in their material culture.

Metal Exploitation and Agriculture

- The Satavahanas were well-acquainted with the use of **iron**, likely exploiting the rich mineral resources of the Deccan, including iron ores from regions like **Karimnagar and Warangal.**

- Additionally, they engaged in **agriculture**, harnessing the fertile land around the confluence of the rivers **Krishna and Godavari** for advanced rice cultivation, showcasing a thriving rural economy.

Coinage and Trade

- In the realm of trade and commerce, the Satavahanas issued a variety of coins, predominantly **lead coins** (potentially imported from the **Romans**), along with **copper and bronze coins.**
- This choice of currency differed from the gold coins prevalent among contemporaneous **Kushanas**. The material culture reflected their engagement in long-distance trade and economic interactions.

The greatest port of the Satavahanas was **Kalyani** on the west Deccan. Gandakasela and Ganjam on the east coast were the other important seaports.

Advanced Rural Economy

- The Deccan under the Satavahanas developed an advanced rural economy. The population exhibited knowledge of agricultural practices, including the sophisticated art of **paddy transplantation**.
  - The region, especially around the confluence of the rivers Krishna and Godavari, emerged as a significant rice-producing area.

Cotton Production and Foreign Recognition

- The Satavahanas were involved in cotton production, earning Andhra a reputation for its cotton products in foreign accounts.
  - This attests to the region's economic significance and trade connections, contributing to the vibrant material culture of the Satavahanas.

The material culture of the Satavahanas serves as a testament to their ability to synthesize diverse influences, resulting in a distinctive and flourishing civilization in ancient India.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

How did the confluence of influences from regions north and south of the Deccan shape the distinctive artistic and material legacy of the Satavahana period? Explore specific examples and discuss the broader implications of this cultural synthesis on the historical narrative of ancient India.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION: A BLEND OF LOCAL AND BRAHMANICAL INFLUENCES

Andhras: Local Deccan Tribe and Brahmanization

- The Andhras, closely associated with the early Satavahanas, likely originated as a local Deccan tribe gradually undergoing Brahmanization.
  - This process involved the assimilation of Brahmanical cultural elements into their social fabric.

Kingship and Vedic Traditions

- Satavahana kings, including notable rulers like Gautamiputra Satkarni, asserted their Brahmin identity and considered upholding the varna system— the four-fold division of social structure based on caste—as a primary duty.
- Kings and queens actively participated in Vedic sacrifices and worshipped **Vaishnava** deities like **Krishna** and **Vasudeva**.

Religious Pluralism: Brahmanical Practices and Buddhism

- While the Satavahanas generously contributed sacrificial fees to Brahmanas, they also played a pivotal role in promoting Buddhism.
  - Land grants to Buddhist monks, particularly those associated with **Mahayana Buddhism**, were a significant aspect of their religious patronage.
  - **Nagarjunakonda** and **Amravati** in Andhra Pradesh, along with **Nashik** and **Junar** in Maharashtra, emerged as important Buddhist sites during the **Satavahana** and **Ikshvaku** rule.

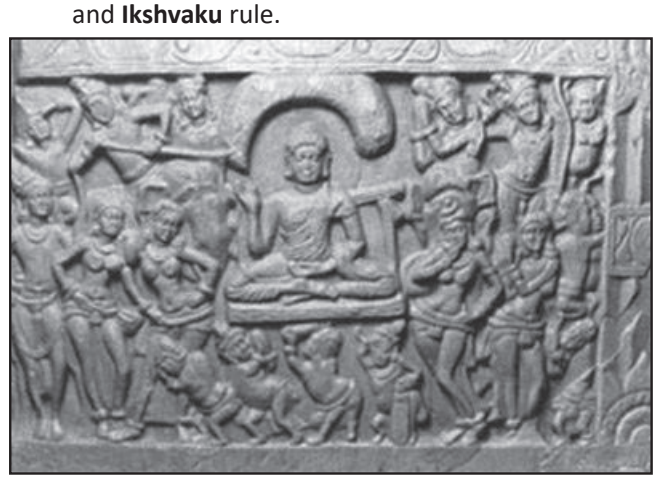


Fig. 9.5: Nagarjunakonda Buddha Sermon Scene

Social Stratification: Merchants and Artisans

- The flourishing trade and commerce under the Satavahanas led to the emergence of distinct social

strata.

- **Merchants** and **artisans** played crucial roles in the economic landscape.
  - Merchants often identified themselves by the towns they belonged to, reflecting a strong association with their localities.
  - Among artisans the **Gandhikas**, who were involved in business of perfumes are noted as donors on multiple occasions. The origin of modern title **Gandhi** is traced back to this.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

Considering the social stratification and interconnectedness under the Satavahanas, how can contemporary societies strike a balance between economic progress, distinct social strata, and the support for cultural and religious pluralism?

Generosity and Buddhist Support

- Both artisans and merchants actively supported the Buddhist cause through generous donations. This philanthropy contributed to the sustenance and growth of Buddhist institutions and monastic communities, further highlighting the social and economic interconnectedness of the period.

The social organization under the Satavahanas exemplifies a dynamic blend of indigenous Deccan traditions and the influence of Brahmanical practices. This cultural amalgamation, coupled with the flourishing trade, commerce, and support for Buddhism, played a crucial role in shaping the vibrant social fabric of the Satavahana period.

SATAVAHANA ART AND ARCHITECTURE

Rock-Cut Chaityas and Viharas

- The Satavahana era witnessed the creation of remarkable architectural marvels in the form of **chaityas** (sacred shrines) and **viharas** (monasteries), meticulously carved out of solid rock in the North-western Deccan, particularly Maharashtra.
- Notable among these structures is the **Karle Chaitya in the western Deccan**, exemplifying the precision and skill employed during this period.

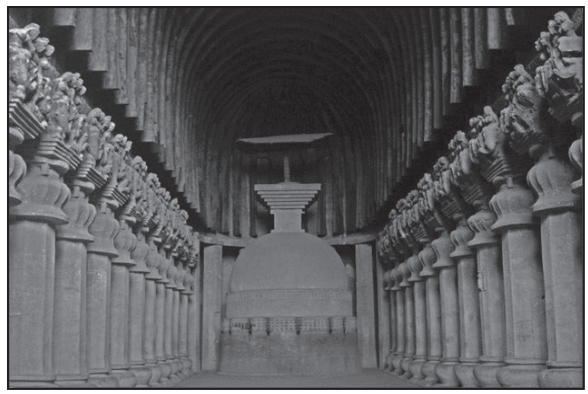


Fig. 9.6: Chaitya at Karle

- **Ajanta Caves:** Caves number 9 and 10 were patronised by Satvahanas. These contain Ajanta paintings, and the painting throughout the caves appears to have begun with them.

Nashik Inscriptions: Architectural Significance

- The Nashik inscriptions, attributed to **Nahapana** and **Gautamiputra Satakarni,** adorn the walls of three viharas and stand as crucial architectural sites from the Satavahana phase.
  - These inscriptions not only provide historical insights but also contribute to the visual richness of the viharas.

Stupas

- **Nagarjunakonda** and **Amravati** in **Andhra Pradesh** and **Nashik** and **Junar** areas of Maharashtra became important Buddhist sites under the Satavahanas and their successors, the Ikshvakus.
- The sculptures of the **Amaravati Stupa** represent the Satavahana periods' architectural development. They constructed Buddhist stupas in **Amravati** (95 feet high).
- They also built many stupas in **Goli, Jaggiahpeta, Gantasala, Amravati Bhattiprolu,** and **Shri Parvatam.**
- The earlier bricks and woodwork on **Ashokan Stupas** were replaced with stonework.
- The stupas are the most well-known of these monuments, with the Amravati Stupa and the Nagarjunakonda Stupa being the most well-known.

Hala's Sattasai is an excellent piece of Prakrit literature.

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE AND SCRIPT

- The official language of the Satavahanas was **Prakrit**, a popular **Middle Indic language**. However, the script used for inscriptions and texts was **Brahmi**.
  - This script, characterized by its widespread use in various Indian regions during ancient times, played a key role in preserving the historical and cultural heritage of the Satavahanas.

Gathasattasai: Literary and Architectural Connection

- A notable literary work associated with the Satavahana era is the **Gathasattasai**, a collection of **700 verses** attributed to Satavahana king **Hala**. While primarily a literary creation, the Gathasattasai adds to the cultural and historical richness of the period.
- The architectural prowess of the Satavahanas finds resonance in the inscription-rich viharas.

EARLY STATE OF KALINGA: KING KHARAVELA AND THE CHEDI DYNASTY

Background: Kalinga in Ashoka's Empire

The region encompassing the Deccan and eastern India, including Kalinga, was integral to Ashoka's vast empire. The conquest of Kalinga, marked by a violent battle, had significant consequences, leading to its prominence in the post-Ashokan period.

Kings of the Chedi Dynasty and Kharavela's Era

Following Ashoka's reign, Kalinga gained prominence under the rule of the Chedi dynasty. Unfortunately, historical records about the kings of this dynasty are scarce, with notable exceptions such as Kharavela, believed to have lived in the 1st century BCE. Kharavela played a pivotal role in establishing an independent line of kings in Kalinga.

Kharavela: Founder and Achievements

Kharavela, likely associated with the **Mahameghavahanas of Kalinga**, is credited with wresting Kalinga from the Mauryans, founding the Chedis or Chetis of Kalinga. He earned the epithet "**Bhikshu-Raja**" and constructed the impressive **'Palace of Victor,'** attesting to the architectural and cultural advancements during his rule.

Hathigumpha Inscription: A Historical Record

One of the most significant sources of information about Kharavela is the Hathigumpha Inscription, engraved on the Udayagiri hills near Bhubaneswar. This inscription, the second by **Naganika** after his **Nanaghat** inscription, provides valuable insights into Kharavela's achievements, including his military successes and cultural contributions.

Jainism and Cave Shelters

- Kharavela is noted as a **follower of Jainism**, who marked a significant phase in the cultural and religious history of Kalinga. The Hathigumpha Inscription reveals his patronage of Jainism, indicating that Jainism likely became the state religion within a century of Mahavira's death.
- Kharavela's support extended to providing cave shelters for Jain monks in the **Udayagiri Hills**.

Legacy and Military Exploits

- The inscription details Kharavela's successful battles against neighbouring regions. His military prowess and strategic acumen are evident in the victories he achieved, solidifying his legacy as a capable ruler.
- King Kharavela's reign stands as a crucial period in the early state of Kalinga, characterized by political independence, cultural advancements, and the establishment of Jainism as a significant religious influence. The **Hathigumpha Inscription**, with its rich historical content, serves as a key source for understanding this pivotal era in Kalinga's history.

CONCLUSION

Ancient India's historical tapestry is intricately woven with diverse dynasties and socio-political developments. The Satavahana Dynasty, a crucial link between North and South India, blended indigenous Deccan traditions with broader subcontinental influences. Their adept administration and innovative practices maintained stability across their territory, evident in rock-cut chaityas and viharas showcasing architectural prowess, religious pluralism, and thriving trade connections. Socially, the era harmonized local traditions, Brahmanical influences, and support for Buddhism, fostering a vibrant social fabric. King Kharavela's Kalinga, marked by military achievements, cultural patronage, and Jainism, adds another layer to this narrative, highlighting the complexity of regional histories within ancient India. The resilience and cultural richness of these societies, exemplified by the Satavahanas and King Kharavela, have left a lasting imprint on the historical legacy of ancient India.

Sangam Age

10

The megalithic background of South India represents a significant shift from the pre-historic to historical eras, featuring the introduction of writing, settled communities, agricultural advancements with iron ploughshares, the emergence of a state system, metal currency, and economic prosperity. These developments, however, did not progress uniformly in **Southern India, notably in the Kaveri delta** region, until the 2nd century BCE.

The Megalithic phase (1200 BCE–300 BCE) succeeded the Neolithic period, with Megalith builders residing in the peninsula's upper regions. Identified through distinctive graves, or megaliths, marked by large stones, they provide the **earliest evidence of iron objects,** including weaponry and pottery. The Megalithic people engaged in **agro-pastoral and hunting activities** with limited agricultural tools. Burial sites, concentrated in Eastern Andhra and Tamil Nadu, include notable locations like Brahmagiri and Adichallanur. The Cholas, Pandyas, and Kerala Putras in Ashokan inscriptions may have been associated with the later Megalithic culture.

Fig. 10.1: Punch Marked Copper coins from Andhra and Pandya country

The **Megalithic period gave way to the Sangam age in South India**. The Sangam Age holds a pivotal role in the historical narrative of South India. Following the Tamil traditions, the region hosted **three Sangams, known as Muchchangam,** which were academies of Tamil poets flourishing under the patronage of the Pandyas.

THE EMERGENCE OF THREE KINGDOMS: THE CHOLAS, THE PANDYAS AND THE CHERAS

- **By the 3rd century BCE,** the Megalithic people underwent a significant geographical shift, moving from upland areas to the fertile river basins and reclaiming marshy deltaic regions. This transition was influenced by material factors, such as the adoption of **iron technology** facilitating forest clearing and plough cultivation, as well as cultural influences from the north through interactions with traders, conquerors, Jaina, Buddhists, Ajivikas, and Brahmana missionaries. As a result, these Megalithic communities embraced wet paddy cultivation, established numerous villages and towns, and developed social classes.
- The emergence of the State system in southern India accompanied the **rise of three early kingdoms—the Cholas, the Pandyas, and the Cheras—in the rice-growing areas of Tamilakam** (the region between the Tirupati hills and the southernmost tip of the peninsula). The historical period in South India is conventionally dated to the 3rd century BCE, although **recent archaeological findings at Kodumanal suggest** that these developments could extend back to at least the 4th century BCE.

Literature as a Source of Understanding of Three Kingdoms

- Primary sources for understanding the political history of this era are the laudatory poems of the Sangam age literature, also known as early classical Tamil literature. The Sangam age denotes a period in the early history of South India when numerous Tamil poems were composed by various authors.
- Sangam literature, which is primarily secular, provides diverse perspectives on everyday themes in a Tamilakam context due to its varied themes and authorship.

"Sangam"

- The term "**Sangam**" refers to an assembly or gathering of **Tamil poets**, traditionally believed to have occurred consecutively at different locations under the patronage of the Pandya kings of Madurai. These poems, influenced by the bardic songs of earlier times, were orally transmitted for an indefinite period before being documented by poets from diverse backgrounds, including dignitaries such as kings, ministers, merchants, and astrologers, as well as common individuals like teachers, soldiers, goldsmiths, blacksmiths, and carpenters.

- Sangam Literature stands as a remarkable testament to the literary, cultural, and ethical heritage of ancient Tamilakam. Its diverse themes and contributions

continue to resonate in contemporary understanding of Tamil culture and society.

Sangam	Place of Organization	Chairman	Outcome/ Relevant Fact
First	Thenmadurai	Agastya	Works did not survive.
Second	Kapatapuram	Agastya, Tolkappiyar (a disciple of Agastya)	Only the **Tolkappiyam (a Tamil grammar) by Tolkappiyar survives.**
Third	Madurai	Nakkirar	Forms the entire corpus of existing Sangam literature.

Compilation and Duration of Sangam Literature

Anthologies and Super Anthologies:

- Sangam literature comprises **six anthologies from the Ettutokai** and **nine songs from the Pattuppattu.**
- Compiled in the **mid-8th century,** these were organised into super anthologies, the Eight Anthologies (Ettutokai) and the 'ten Idylls' (pattuppattu).

Poetic Contributions:

- **2381 poems by 473 poets,** including **30 women poets**, are part of Sangam Literature.
- Stylistic elements and historical references suggest composition between the **3rd century BCE** and the **3rd Century CE.**

Grammar and Poetics:

- **Tolkappiyam**, is the most ancient extant Tamil grammar text and the oldest extant long work of Tamil literature, composed by Tolkappiyar, is part of the Sangam Literature corpus.
- **Agattiyam**, the first known book on Tamil grammar, is attributed to the sage Agathiyar.

Legends and Historical Context

Agathiyar and Tamil Language:

- According to Hindu legends, Agathiyar, a sage credited with bringing the Tamil language from god Shiva, is considered Tolkappiyar's teacher.

Themes in Sangam Literature:

- It revolves around **akam (love) and puram (based on War)**, as well as public poetry on good and evil, community, and kingdom).
- Vibrant depiction of Tamilakam society and culture with interactions with Northern (Aryan) culture.

Categorization of Sangam Literature and It's Narration

Narrative Works (Melkannaku):

- Narrative texts are called Melkannakku (18 major works consisting of eight anthologies and ten idylls) and are considered works of heroic poetry in which heroes are glorified and perpetual wars and cattle raids are frequently mentioned.
- The **Ettutogai, or Eight Anthologies**, consists of Aingurunooru, Narrinai, Aganaooru, Purananooru, Kuruntogai, Kalittogai, Paripadal, and Padirruppattu, and the **Pattuppattu, or Ten Idylls**, comprises works like Thirumurugarruppadai, Porunararruppadai, Sirupanarruppadai, Perumpanarruppadai, Mullaippattu, Nedunalvadai, Maduraikkanji, Kurinjippatttu, Pattinappalai, and Malaipadukadam. Heroic poetry glorifies heroes, emphasising perpetual wars and cattle raids.

Didactic Works (Kilkanakku):

- The didactic works are called **Kilkanakku (18 Minor Works)**. It comprises didactic works like **Tirukkural by Tiruvalluvar**, a significant ethical, philosophical, love and political work.
- It includes epics like **Silappadikaram** (a bright gem of early Tamil literature which deals with love story of Kovalan, who prefers a courtesan Madhavi of Kaveripattnam to his noble wedded wife Kannagi) and **Manimekalai known as the 'Odyssey of Tamil poetry'** composed in the 5th and 6th centuries which deals with the adventures of the daughter born of the union of Kovalan and Madhavi and her subsequent conversion to Buddhism.

Other Sources about the Sangam Age

- Apart from the Sangam literature, Greek authors such as **Megasthenes, Strabo, Pliny, and Ptolemy** provide accounts of commercial interactions between the Western and Southern regions of India. The Ashokan inscriptions reference the rulers of the Chera, Chola, and Pandya dynasties located south of the Mauryan empire. The **Hathigumpha inscription of Kharavela of Kalinga** also acknowledges the existence of Tamil kingdoms.
- Archaeological excavations at sites like **Arikkamedu, Poompuhar, Kodumanal,** and others shed light on the overseas commercial endeavours of the Tamils. These diverse sources, including literary works, foreign accounts, inscriptions, and archaeological findings, collectively contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the historical dynamics and commercial engagements involving South India during this period.

Significance of Sangam Literature

- This corpus holds profound cultural and historical significance, providing a vivid depiction of Tamilakam society and culture during the Sangam period.
- Its documented peaceful exchanges with Aryan culture contribute to a cohesive and harmonious cultural milieu.
- **Tirukkural**, a timeless masterpiece, forms the bedrock of ethical, philosophical, and amorous contemplations, earning acclaim as the fifth Veda of Tamil Nadu.
- Its enduring relevance underscores the profound ethical and philosophical legacy of the Sangam era.
- The **epics Silappadikaram and Manimekalai,** esteemed literary creations of the Sangam period, significantly enrich the literary heritage.
- These prominent works, with their narrative depth and cultural nuances, substantially contribute to the diverse literary tapestry of the time.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

Examine the sources beyond Sangam literature, such as Greek authors, Ashokan inscriptions, and archaeological findings. How do these diverse sources collectively enhance our understanding of the historical dynamics and commercial engagements in South India during the Sangam Age?

Age of Sangam Literature

The chronological framework of Sangam literature remains a subject of scholarly contention.

- The anchor for the Sangam chronology is grounded in the contemporaneity of **Gajabhagu II of Sri Lanka and Cheran Senguttuvan of the Chera dynasty,** a correlation substantiated by sources such as Silappadikaram, Dipavamsa, and Mahavamsa.
- Additionally, the abundance of **Roman coins** issued by emperors from the first century A.D. discovered in various locations across Tamil Nadu contributes to this temporal assessment.
- As a result, the prevailing consensus places the period of Sangam literature between the **third century B.C. and the third century A.D.,** drawing upon a synthesis of literary, archaeological, and numismatic evidence.

Verse and Power: The Symbiotic Dynamics of Poet-Patron Relationships in Early South India

In early historical South India, the primary foundation for the legitimization of political power rested on the accolades bestowed by poets.

- The dynamic between a poet and a patron in ancient Tamilakam was symbiotic, as highlighted by scholars like **Kailasapathy** and **Shulman.**
- The poet relied on the patron not only for material support and well-being but also for the crucial task of singing praises of the patron's generosity and heroism.
- Interestingly, this dependence was mutual. The **king, despite holding a position of authority, was reliant on the poet's verses to secure enduring fame.**
- The intricate interplay between political power and poetic expression underscored the significance of the poet-patron relationship in shaping the narratives of authority and prestige in early South Indian history.

THE TRIAD OF EARLY KINGDOMS: PANDYAS, CHOLAS, AND CHERAS

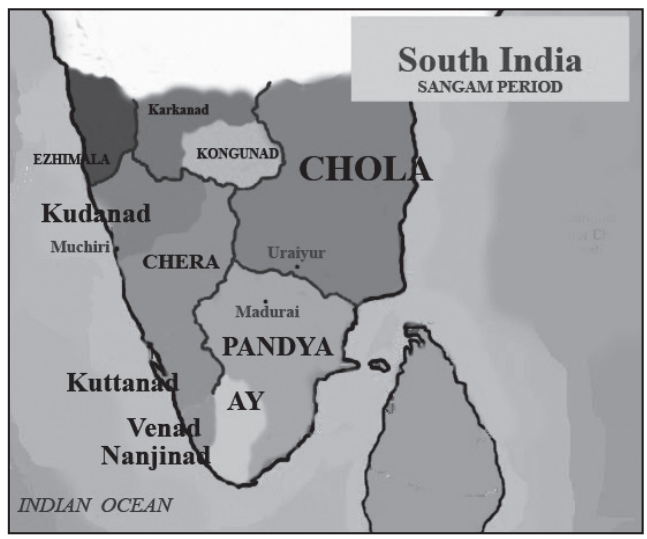


Fig. 10.2: Territories of Cholas, Cheras and Pandyas

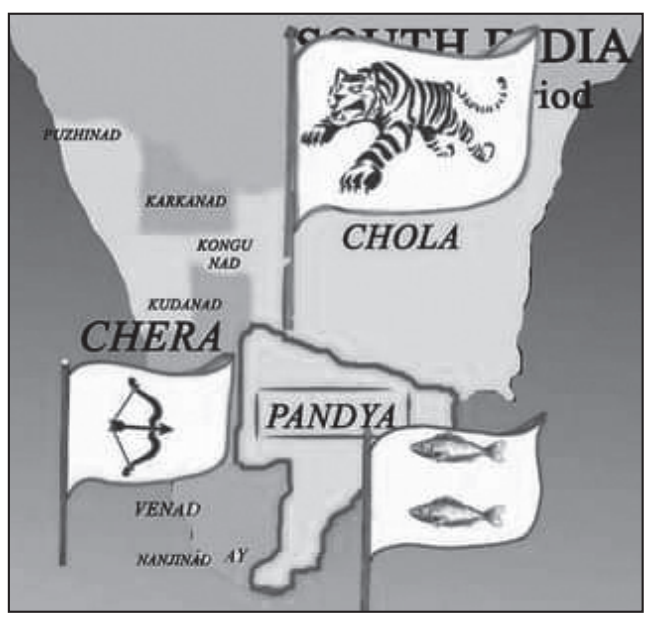


Fig. 10.3: The emblems of Cholas, Cheras and Padyas

- The southern region of the Indian peninsula, situated below the Krishna River, was divided among three early kingdoms and numerous hereditary chieftains. During

the Sangam Age, the prominent **vendar (crowned kings)** who wielded influence in the **Tamilakam region** were the Pandyas in the valleys of **Tamrapani (Sri Lanka)** and **Vaigai, the Cholas** in the **lower Krishna valley,** and **the Cheras** on the **Kerala coast.** These kings each had distinctive royal symbols, including a special umbrella, drum, and staff.

- The **Cholas, Pandyas, and Cheras** had subordinate chiefs known as **velir** (chieftains), who regularly paid tribute to the king. Alliances and conflicts between the kings and chieftains were common occurrences, leading to internal strife and providing ample material for Sangam poets to compose poems centred around warfare.

Table 10.1: Capital, Emblem and main Port

Kingdom	Capital	Emblem	Port
Pandyas (covers modern Tirunelveli, Madurai, Ramnad districts, and south Travancore).	Madurai	**Fish**	Korkai
Cholas (covers modern Tanjore and Trichinopoly district of Tamil Nadu)	Uraiyur	**Tiger**	Puhar (Kaveripattinam)
Cheras (covers mostly Kerala coast)	Vanji/ Karuvur	**Bow**	Tondi and Muchiri

THE PANDYAS

The **Pandya territory** encompassed the Southernmost and South-eastern regions of the Indian peninsula. The earliest reference to the Pandyas comes from **Megasthenes** in his work **"Indica,"** where he mentions a Pandya Kingdom renowned for its **pearls** and **ruled by a woman**, which suggests potential matriarchal influence in Pandya society.

Sangam Literature also acknowledges Pandya rulers and portrays the Pandya kingdom as affluent and prosperous. The Pandya kings engaged in profitable trade with the Roman Empire and dispatched envoys to the **Roman emperor Augustus.** They actively participated in Vedic sacrifices, and the Brahmanas in their domain held significant influence. Among the early Pandya kings were **Nediyon, Palshalai and Mudukudumi**, and other Pandya kings.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

Assess the geopolitical significance of the locations chosen as capitals by the Pandyas, Cholas, and Cheras. How did these strategic choices contribute to the political and economic strength of each kingdom during the Sangam Age?

Some Important Pandya Kings

Nedunjeliyan I

- He was known for his tragic involvement in the execution of **Kovalan**, the **hero and husband of Kannagi in the Silappadikaram.**
- He is believed to have succumbed to remorse.

Nedunjeliyan II

- Another crucial Pandya king, who achieved numerous military victories and expanded the kingdom by acquiring territories from other chieftains.
- At a young age, he defeated a coalition of Cheras, Cholas, and five other chieftains in the **Battle of Talaiyalanganam,** where the Chera king was captured.
- Two **Tamil Brahmi inscriptions** from **Mangulam** in the early 2nd century BCE indicate that a subordinate and relative of Nedunjeliyan presented gifts to Jaina monks.

Additionally, a **1st century BCE inscription** from **Alagarmalai** mentions Kattumara Natan, likely a Pandyan prince or subordinate.

THE CHOLAS

- The Chola kingdom, also known as **Cholamandalam or Coromandel** during early medieval times, was positioned North-east of the Pandya territory and between **the Penner and Velar rivers**. Their capital, **Uraiyur,** served as a significant political and trade centre, particularly renowned for the **cotton trade.**
- The Cholas maintained a formidable navy, and historical records indicate that in the mid-2nd century BCE, a Chola king named **Elara conquered Sri Lanka,** ruling over it for approximately 50 years. The Cholas derived their wealth primarily from the lucrative **cotton cloth trade.**

Some Important Chola Rulers

Karaikala

- **Karikala**, one of the greatest Chola kings, founded the port **city of Puhar** (modern **Kaveripattanam**), a major hub for trade and commerce with a large dock.
- He is credited with constructing a 160 km embankment along the Kaveri River, built using the labour of 12,000 captives from Sri Lanka.
- **Karikala achieved** significant **military successes**, defeating a **confederacy of Pandyas, Cheras, and their allies** at the **Battle of Venni.**
- Sangam texts highlight the loss of royal drums (royal drum was an important insignia of royal power) by eleven rulers, and the Chera king, who suffered a wound in the back, died of **vattakirutal (ritual starvation).**

Tondaiman Ilandiraiyan

- Another notable Chola ruler governed from Kanchi, either independently or as a subordinate to Karikala.

- He was a gifted poet and emphasised the importance of a king's strong personal character for effective rule.
- Under **Karikala's rule**, especially during the reigns of his successors **Nalangilli and Nedungilli,** internal conflicts led to a rapid decline in **Chola power**. Their neighbouring powers expanded their empires, and later, the Pallavas from the north seized many Chola territories. From the 4th to the 9th century CE, the Cholas played a marginal role in South Indian history.

The Chola power witnessed a swift decline under the rule of Kankala's successors. The capital, Kaveripattanam, faced overwhelming destruction. Meanwhile, the Cheras and the Pandyas, who were neighbouring powers, expanded their territories at the expense of the Cholas. The remnants of Chola power faced further setbacks as the Pallavas from the north launched attacks, nearly wiping out what remained. From the fourth to the ninth century A.D., the Cholas played a peripheral role in South Indian history.

THE CHERAS

- The Cheras were positioned West and North of the Pandyas, and their kingdom thrived due to prosperous trade with the Romans. Notably, the Romans established two regiments at **Muziris/Muchiri (near modern Kochi)** to safeguard their interests and even constructed a temple dedicated to **Augustus.** The Chera kingdom's history was marked by continual conflicts with the Cholas and the Pandyas.
- One pivotal moment in the political chronicles of the Cheras unfolded around 150 AD when they engaged in a significant **conflict with the Cholas**. Despite successfully eliminating the father of Chola king **Karikala**, the victory came at a high cost, as the Chera king also met his demise. Subsequently, the two realms entered into a temporary reconciliation, sealing the agreement with a matrimonial alliance.
- Following this, the Chera king formed an alliance with the Pandya rulers against the Cholas. However, the Cholas emerged triumphant in the ensuing confrontation. According to accounts, the Chera king, having suffered a wound to his back, chose to end his own life in an act of shame and despair.

Some Important Chera Kings

Udiyanjeral:

- He was the earliest known Chera king.

Nedunjeral Adan:

- A prominent king of the Chera dynasty, he was credited with defeating seven crowned kings and earning the title of **adhiraja.**
- He engaged in **battles on the Malabar coast**, captured Yavana traders, and fought against a Chola king, resulting in the unfortunate demise of both adversaries.
- His younger brother, **Kuttuvan**, expanded Chera power by conquering Kongu and extending influence to the eastern and western oceans.
- Adan's son, described as an adhiraja with a garland of seven crowns, was victorious against the Tagadur chieftain Anji.

Senguttuvan:

- The son of Nedunjeral Adan, also known as the Red or Good Chera, considered the greatest Chera king by Chera poets.
- He led successful military expeditions, defeating the Mokur chieftain and achieving conquests described in the post-Sangam text Silappadikaram. Senguttuvan played a role in a Chola succession conflict, supporting one claimant and eliminating nine others.
- He claimed to have invaded the north, fought against an Aryan chieftain to obtain stone for an image of Kannagi (the Silappadikaram heroine and goddess of chastity), crossed the Ganga, and brought the stone back to his country.

Kudakko Ilanjeral Irumporai:

- One of the last Chera kings mentioned in Sangam texts, believed to have won wars against the Cholas and Pandyas.

After the 2nd century CE, Chera power declined, and their history remains less known until the 8th century CE. Sangam poets also praised various chieftains, including **Ay**, **Andiran, and Pari,** for their heroism and generosity.

Other Minor Chieftains

- The Sangam period witnessed a notable influence exerted by minor chieftains, who played a substantive role during this era.
- Figures such as **Pari, Kari, Ori, Nalli, Pegan, Ay, and Adiyaman** gained renown for their philanthropic endeavours and staunch support of Tamil poets, earning them the **epithet "Kadai Yelu Vallalgal."**
- Despite their subordinate status in relation to the Chera, Chola, and Pandya rulers, these minor chieftains held considerable power and enjoyed popularity within their respective regions.
- Their significance lay not only in their allegiance to the major dynasties but also in their independent influence, marked by a commitment to philanthropy and the promotion of Tamil poetry and culture.

SANGAM EPOCH: EVOLVING DIMENSIONS OF ROYAL PRESTIGE AND POLITICAL STRUCTURE IN ANCIENT SOUTH INDIA

Royal Prestige During Sangam Age

The Sangam poems depict the **evolution of new sources of royal prestige and legitimacy** in addition to traditional ones.

- These include the performance of Brahmanical sacrifices, connections to the northern epic tradition, patronage of specific deities, and support for Jaina ascetics.
- Kings are mentioned engaging in Vedic sacrifices, and titles like **"Palshalai"** indicate their association with sacrificial halls.
- Some chiefs claim to originate from the **sacrificial fire pit of a northern sage**, linking themselves to **Agastya** and **Vishnu. Adigaiman** is noted for being born into a family that honoured gods through worship and sacrifices. **King Senguttuvan** is credited with establishing the **cult of the goddess Pattini**, while legend describes Chola king Senganan as devoted to Shiva.

Political structure During Sangam Age

- The evidence suggests a level of **urbanisation and state polity. Champakalakshmi** argues that the era consisted of tribal chiefdoms or **"potential monarchies."**
- However, the poems refer to kings making lavish gifts, implying varied access to resources. Kings participated in long-distance trade, developed ports, and imposed tolls.
- The existence of dynastic coinage and involvement in maritime trade implies at least a basic state structure, even if control over agrarian plains, a systematic taxation system, or centralized coercive machinery were not fully established by the Chola, Chera, and Pandya rulers.

SOCIETY DURING SANGAM AGE

Economy in The Sangam Age

Tamilakam's Economic Zones:

- The Tamilakam region during this period was categorized into **five tinais, or economic zones,** based on economic resources: **kurinji** (hilly region), **palai** (arid zone), **mullai** (pastoral tracts), **marudam** (wetlands), and **neital** (seacoast).
- These zones, though not distinctly demarcated, influenced distinct modes of subsistence for the people residing in each.

Economic Activities:

- People practised varied economic activities, included agriculture, crafts, and trade.
- **Rice, the principal crop**, played a dual role as a **dietary staple** and a medium for **barter exchange** in inland trade.
- The **fertile regions** produced **paddy, ragi, sugarcane, fruit, pepper, and turmeric**.
- **The Chiefs** facilitated agricultural activities by constructing tanks and dams; **the Chola king Karikala** of Sangam age is credited with constructing an **early dam on the river Kaveri**.

Crafts and Trade:

- Prominent crafts included **spinning and weaving textiles**, both **cotton and silk.**
- **Salt manufacturing** was a crucial economic activity.
- Trade, both **internal and foreign**, was a crucial revenue source.
- **Custom officials in Puhar** regulated trade, and transit duties were levied on moving merchants.
- **Spoils of war** also contributed to the royal income.

Indo-Roman Trade:

- Described in detail by the anonymous author of the **"Periplus of the Erythrean Sea"** in the 1st century CE and **'Natural History' by** another **Roman writer Pliny.**
- Romans exported gold and silver to India, while India exported **spices (Yavanapriya or pepper),** perfumes, jewels, ivory, fine textiles (Muslins), **precious and semi-precious stones like diamond, carnelian, turquoise, agate, sapphire, and also beside this pearls, indigo, sandalwood, iron, and steel cutlery. It is confirmed by the recovery of a large number of Roman gold coins in south India.**
- Other important items of **export** from the Roman empire included **wine,** which is indicated by **wine amphorae** and **shards of Roman wares** found in significant numbers at Arikamedu in south India.
- Roman writer Pliny noted the drain of gold from Rome due to trade with India.
- The recovery of Roman gold coins in South India confirms the gold-silver exchange.

Maritime Trade Routes:

- The discovery of monsoons by Hippatus in 45 CE facilitated sea voyages for trade.
- **Western coast ports** like **Bharukachchha (Broach), Sopara, Kalyana, and Muziris** connected with the Roman Empire via the Red Sea.
- **Eastern coast ports** like **Tamralipti (Western Bengal) and Arikamedu (Tamilnadu coast)** facilitated trade with south-east Asia.

Impact on the Local Economy:

- The economies of all three kingdoms flourished due to large-scale local and long distance trade.
- It led to rise of important towns and craft centres in the Tamil region. Vanji, the capital of the **Cheras**, was an important centre of trade and craft.

- **Muziris/Muchiri** on the **south-west coast** was the foremost port of the Cheras. It is believed that the Roman ships laden with gold used to land here and took back large amounts of pepper.
- An interesting 2nd century document, the **Vienna Papyrus**, records an agreement regarding transportation of goods between two merchants based in **Alexandria and Muchiri.**
- **Madurai, the capital of the Pandyas**, was an important centre of fine textile and ivory working.
- **Korkai, in the Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu**, was an important Pandya port which was famous for its pearls.
- **Uraiyur (Tiruchirapalli in Tamil Nadu)**, the capital of the Cholas, was a grand city with magnificent buildings.
- **Kaveripattinam or Puhar**, was the main **Chola port.**
- The **Sangam poems** refer to the busy markets guarded by soldiers who, in order to ensure the safety of merchants and prevent smuggling, used to maintain constant vigil on, the trade routes.
- Transit duties were collected, and tribute, along with war spoils, constituted the main sources of revenue.

Social Structure and Organisation

Structure of Tamil Society:

- Mentioned **kings as "Ko"** and **chieftains as "Ko" or "Kon."**
- Brahmanas first appeared in the Sangam age in Tamil land. Many Brahmanas served as poets and were generously rewarded by kings.
- Tamil Brahmanas consumed meat and wine.
- Varna concept existed, but **caste distinctions were not acute** in the early Sangam period. Social classes became more pronounced in the later stages.
- **Kuti (clan-based descent groups)** was a significant basis of stratification.
- No restrictions on inter-dining and social interactions among Kuti groups.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

How do you think the social structure of the Sangam period, with its clan-based descent groups and minimal caste distinctions, compares to contemporary ideas of social equality and inclusivity?

Ruling Class and Peasantry

- The ruling class, known as **arasars**, had marital relations with **vellalas (rich peasants).**
- Vellalas, forming the fourth caste of peasants, held the bulk of land and employed **agricultural labor (kadaisiyan).**
- Some agricultural labourers known as **pariyars** also worked in animal skins and used them as mats.
- People were identified by their occupation, including artisans, salt merchants, and textile merchants.
- Sharp social inequalities existed; the rich lived lavishly while the poor had modest living conditions.

Religious Interactions in the Sangam Period

- During the Sangam period, there was a harmonious interaction between the religious traditions of North India and South India.
- Brahmanas, who conducted religious ceremonies, popularised the **worship of Indra, Vishnu, and Shiva** in the southern region.
- Sangam poems indicate the establishment of new sources of royal prestige and legitimacy through Brahmanical sacrifices.
- An example is the **Pandya ruler Mudukudumi, who adopted the title Palshalai**, signifying ownership of multiple sacrificial halls.

Chief Deities of each Economic Zone

- **Kurinji:** Chief deity - Murugan; Primary occupation - Hunting and honey collection.
- **Mullai:** Chief deity - Mayon (Vishnu); Chief occupation - Cattle-rearing and dairy product trade.
- **Marudam:** Chief deity - Indira; Emphasis on agriculture.
- **Neydal:** Chief deity - Varunan; Chief occupation - Fishing and salt manufacturing.
- **Palai:** Chief deity - Korravai; Chief occupation - Robbery.

Diversity of Beliefs in the Tamil Region:

- References in historical accounts suggest the presence of Buddhists and Jainas in the Tamil region.
- Local inhabitants, especially those in the hills, worshipped a deity named **Murugan, identified with Kartikeya**, a war god in northern India, **later known as Subramaniya** in Medieval times.

Continuation of Megalithic Burial Practices:

- The Sangam Age maintained the **Megalithic practice of providing offerings to the dead**, such as rice.
- Cremation was introduced as a new burial practice during this period.

Beliefs in Sacred and Magical Forces

- Sangam texts reveal a belief in sacred or magical forces referred to as **ananku**, thought to inhabit various objects.
- **Lower castes like pariyans, pananas, and velans** were entrusted with the **responsibility of performing rites and rituals** to appease or control the ananku.

- These lower castes were associated with ritualistic activities, including dancing, singing, lighting cremation fires, and worshipping **natukal (memorial stones)**.
- Ananku was believed to cling to women, and it was a common belief that a woman's chastity controlled her ananku, conferring auspicious potential.

Diversity in Sangam Society

- Inclusion of diverse **tribal groups such as Parathavar, Panar, Eyinar, Kadambar, Maravar, and Pulaiyar.**
- Presence of ancient **primitive tribes like Thodas, Irulas, Nagas, and Vedars.**
- The intricate social structure underscores the complexity and diversity characterizing the Sangam period.

Status of Women

- Women were educated, contributing poems to Sangam literature.
- Engaged in various economic activities like paddy plantation, cattle rearing, and basket-making.
- **Sati, known as tippayadal**, was prevalent but not obligatory.
- Widows faced a miserable position with restrictions on adornment and participation in activities.
- Sangam poems mentioned **chevilittai**, likened to foster mothers, closely associated with family members.

Military and Society

- Warriors were crucial in polity and society.
- Commanders of the army received the **title of enadi** at a formal ceremony.
- The state maintained a rudimentary army with chariots, elephants, cavalry, and infantry.
- War heroes were commemorated with memorial stones **(nadukal or virukkal)**.

Unveiling Village Life: Insights from Ancient Texts and Inscriptions in South India (200 BCE - 300 CE)

- Our understanding of urban centers from around **200 BCE** to **300 CE** is more comprehensive than our knowledge of villages and agriculture during the same period.
- The Jatakas, ancient Buddhist texts, provide insights into **gamas**, ranging from 30 to 1,000 **kulas (extended families)**. These gamas are associated with specific occupational groups like reed workers (nalakaras) and salt makers (lonakaras).
- Additionally, references are made to villages inhabited by potters, carpenters, smiths, forest dwellers, hunters, fowlers, and fishermen, with some of these villages located in proximity to cities.
- Early Tamil–Brahmi inscriptions shed light on aspects of village life in Tamilakam. For instance, a 2nd-century BCE inscription at Varichiyur documents the gift of 100 kalams of rice.
- Another inscription from the 1st century BCE at Alagarmalai mentions a **koluvanikan, a trader specialising in ploughshares**.
- Furthermore, a 2nd-century BCE inscription discovered at **Mudalaikulam** appears to reference the construction of a tank by the assembly (ur) of Vempil village. If Mahadevan's interpretation is accurate, this inscription represents the earliest recorded reference to a village assembly in the Indian subcontinent.

Fine Arts

During the Sangam age, the populace held a deep appreciation for poetry, music, and dance. Generous contributions from kings, chieftains, and nobles were extended to poets. The royal courts bustled with **singing bards known as Panar and Viraliyar,** who excelled in folk songs and dances. The realms of music and dance experienced considerable refinement, with a diverse array of Yazhs and drums mentioned in Sangam literature. **Kanigaiyar** were **skilled performers of dance**, while **Koothu** emerged as the **pre-dominant form of entertainment**, capturing the hearts of the people.

Table 10.1: Key Terms and Definitions

Key Term	Meaning	Key Term	Meaning
Kalatika	Superintendent of pearl fisheries	**Atavirakkhikakula**	Family of forest guards
Kanatikan	Chief of scribes	**Dhannavanijakula**	Family of grain merchants
Nalakars	Reed workers	**Pannikakula**	Family of greengrocers
Lonakaras	Salt makers	**Pasanakottakakula**	Family of stone grinders
Koluvanikan	Trader in ploughshares	**Satthavahaputta**	Son of caravan trader
Kolu	Hard iron tip fixed to a wooden ploughshare	**Nisadaputta**	Son of hunter

Ur	Assembly of village elders	**Vaddhakiputta**	Son of carpenter
Emporium	Coastal town associated with foreign trade	**Shailalakas/Selavadhaki**	Stone masons
Pattinam	Port	**Kamara**	Blacksmith
Satthavahakula	Family of caravan traders	**Gadhika**	Perfumer
Kumbhakarakula	Family of potters	**Karshapana**	Copper coin
Setthikula	Family of merchants cum bankers	**Niyamakjettha**	Head of the sailor's guild
Kammarakula	Family of metal smiths	**Katikai**	Assembly of learned persons
Eripatti	It was Tank lands i.e land donated by individuals, the revenue from which was set apart for the maintenance of the village tank	**Taniyurs**	It was a large village and were distinct revenue units under Cholas.
Brahmadeya	Villages donated to a single Brahmin or a group of Brahmins are known as Brahmadeya.	**Ghatika**	It was a centre of learning including religion and was small in size while an Agrahara was a bigger institution. Ghatikas were institutions mostly attached to temples

CONCLUSION

The Sangam Age unfolds as a remarkable epoch in South Indian history, characterised by the rich tapestry of Sangam literature, vibrant cultural expressions, and intricate social structures. The literature not only serves as a window into the past but also reflects the nuanced interplay of diverse landscapes, occupations, and deities that shaped the ethos of the time. The era's minor chieftains, major dynasties, and the dynamic roles played by poets and patrons further underscore the complexity of Sangam society. From the distinct divisions of lands to the four-fold caste system and the flourishing arts, the Sangam Age exemplifies a period of profound cultural richness and historical significance, leaving an enduring legacy that continues to captivate our understanding of ancient South India.

The Guptas

11

The Gupta Empire, a cornerstone of ancient Indian history, stands as a testament to a golden era marked by political sagacity, cultural flourishing, and economic prosperity. Emerging in the wake of the **Mauryan Empire's dissolution,** the Guptas ascended to power **around A.D. 275,** establishing a realm that would significantly influence the sub-continent for over a century. Situated predominantly in the northern part of the Indian subcontinent, the Gupta Empire's zenith, spanning **from A.D. 335 to A.D. 455,** witnessed a remarkable blend of political stability, military prowess, and intellectual brilliance. The Guptas not only succeeded in unifying a fragmented north India but also provided an environment conducive to the growth of art, science, and trade.

At the heart of the Gupta Empire's success was its strategic positioning, with the **fertile plains of Madhya Desa**, covering present-day Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, serving as its core. This region's economic richness, coupled with the Gupta rulers' adept governance, laid the foundation for an expansive and influential empire. The Guptas, possibly of **Vaishya origin,** displayed an astute understanding of **statecraft and military strategy,** combining these skills with an appreciation for the arts and learning. As a result, the Gupta period is often referred to as **a "Golden Age,"** witnessing significant achievements in **literature, mathematics, and the visual arts**, with scholars like **Aryabhata and Kalidasa** contributing to the cultural tapestry of ancient India. The Gupta Empire stands as a beacon of classical Indian civilization, symbolizing an era of remarkable achievements and enduring legacy.

SOURCES OF THE GUPTA PERIOD

Literary Sources

- **Puranas:** These ancient Indian texts provide insights into the royal genealogy of the Gupta kings, shedding light on their lineage.
- **Devichandraguptam and Mudhrakshasam:** Contemporary literary works, authored by Visakadatta, offer information on the rise of the Gupta dynasty. These works likely provide narratives and historical context.

Travel Account

- **Fa-Hien:** The Chinese traveller Fa-Hien visited India during the reign of Chandragupta II, leaving behind a valuable account. His observations cover social, economic, and religious aspects of the Gupta empire, providing an external perspective on the conditions of that time.

Inscriptions

- **Meherauli Iron Pillar Inscription and Allahabad Pillar Inscription:** These inscriptions serve as valuable epigraphical sources, potentially containing information on significant events, rulers, or achievements during the Gupta period.

Numismatic Sources

Coins: The coins issued by Gupta kings are rich in information. The legends and figures on these coins provide details about the titles and sacrifices performed by the Gupta monarchs. Numismatic evidence can also contribute to understanding economic aspects and trade during the Gupta era.

BACKGROUND OF THE GUPTAS

Following the disintegration of the **Maurya Empire, the Satavahanas in the Deccan and south,** along with the **Kushans in the north,** emerged as stabilizing forces. The Satavahanas, through trade with the Roman Empire, fostered political unity and economic prosperity in the Deccan. Concurrently, the **Kushans** played a crucial role in the north. In the mid of 3rd century A.D., the empires of the Satavahanas and Kushanas came to an end, paving the way for the rise of a new power—**the Gupta Empire.** The Guptas, potentially of vaishya origin, governed a significant part of the former territories of the Kushans and Satavahanas, unifying north India politically from A.D. 335 to A.D. 455.

Gupta Empire

The Guptas, believed to be feudatories of the Kushans and likely Vaishyas in Origin, ruled over the fertile part of Madhyadesha, including Anuganga(the middle Gangetic Basin), **Saketa** (modern Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh), and Magadha (mostly Bihar). **Prayag** (modern Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh) served as a crucial center of power, facilitating the empire's expansion due to its strategic location.

Some Important Features of the Gupta Empire

- **The emergence of the Gupta Empire:** The **Gupta Empire** emerged in the aftermath of the Kushan Empire's collapse, possibly succeeding them without a substantial time gap. The core of the Gupta Kingdom comprised **Uttar Pradesh and Bihar** by the late third century A.D. Uttar Pradesh, particularly, played a pivotal role in Gupta activities, potentially serving as the **nexus of Gupta power,** with Prayag as a likely center.

- **Economic Advantages:** The Gupta Empire strategically exploited **iron ore deposits in central India and southern Bihar,** and its proximity to regions engaged in silk trade with the Byzantine Empire (Eastern Roman Empire) bolstered economic advantages.
- The **state seal 'Garuda'** is associated with the Gupta Empire, and historians often laud the Gupta period as **India's 'golden age.**
- This era was characterized by political unification under a centralized government, the production of **outstanding Sanskrit literary works,** sophisticated stone sculpture and architecture, and innovative advancements in science and technology.
- The political history of the Guptas is primarily reconstructed through **excavated inscriptions** and coins.
- Gupta artefacts, predominantly discovered in **Uttar Pradesh,** highlight the region's importance as the starting point for **Gupta expansion.**
- The Gupta military, characterized by mobility and expertise in **horse-centric warfare,** might have been influenced by the Kushans' use of saddles, reins, and horses.

GUPTA DYNASTY AND ITS RULERS

Founder of the Gupta Dynasty

The Gupta dynasty was founded by **Maharaja Gupta/Sri Gupta**, following which the next ruler was Maharaja Ghatotkacha.

Chandragupta I (c. 319–335/336 CE)

Chandragupta I, one of the most important rulers of the Gupta Dynasty, assumed the throne around **319–20 CE,** playing a pivotal role in establishing the Gupta Empire. Holding the prestigious title of **maharajadhiraja**, or "The King of kings," he set the stage for the Gupta era and ruled until approximately 335/336 CE.

Marriage and Strategic Alliances:

- Chandragupta I strategically strengthened his power and prestige through a significant matrimonial alliance. His marriage to **Kumaradevi,** a princess of the **Kshatriya Lichchhavi clan of Nepal,** held immense strategic importance.
- Since the Gupta likely Vaishya caste, this union not only provided legitimacy but also bestowed prestige and strength upon the Gupta rulers.
- The acknowledgement of this alliance was symbolized through the issuance of coins bearing the **joint names of the Emperor,** his queen, and the Lichchhavi nation, underlining the enduring significance of this marital connection.
- This legacy continued into subsequent generations, with Samudragupta, Chandragupta I's successor, being recognized as **Lichchhavi-dauhitra,** emphasizing the enduring importance of the Gupta-Lichchhavi connection in the historical narrative.

Territorial Extent: His territorial dominion covered modern **Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Bengal,** with the imperial capital situated at Pataliputra. Chandragupta I established his authority over Magadha, Prayaga and Saketa.

Samudragupta (c.335–375 CE)

Samudragupta, the son of Chandragupta I, ascended to the Gupta throne around 335/336 CE and was one of the greatest kings of the Gupta dynasty. A disputed succession marked his accession. It was believed to be due to his father's choice of him as the successor over several elder brothers. A struggle for succession ensued, and **Samudragupta** emerged victorious after reportedly subduing his rival, **Kachagupta,** an obscure prince and his brother.

- **Military Conquests and Strategic Policies**
  - Samudragupta pursued a **policy of aggressive war and conquest,** significantly expanding the Gupta Kingdom. **So he was referred to as** the **'Napoleon' of India by historian V. A. Smith.**
  - Samudragupta first defeated the **nine rulers of Aryavartha** in the region of Ganga-Yamuna doab and annexed these kingdoms to his empire.
  - His rule saw conquests of **neighbouring territories,** eastward and southward campaigns, and annexation of chiefdoms and kingdoms.
  - His achievements were meticulously documented in the **Allahabad pillar's inscription**, composed in pure Sanskrit by his court poet **Harisena**. The inscription highlighted Samudragupta's military prowess, contrasting it with the peaceful emphasis of Ashoka's earlier inscriptions.
- The Allahabad pillar (Prayaga Prashasti), also contains inscriptions of Ashoka and later, the Mughal emperor Jahangir.

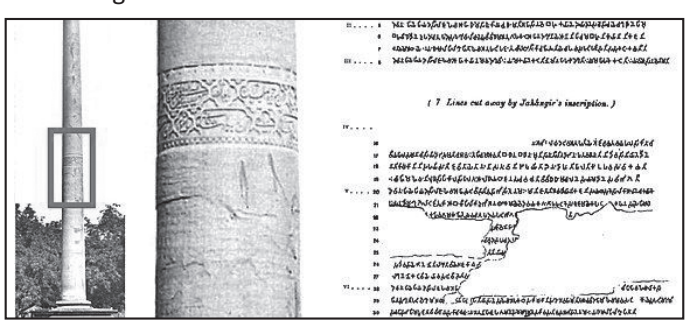


Fig. 11.1: Allahabad Pillar Inscription

- **Court Poet Harisena**: He was also a **kumaramatya,** that is, a high-ranking official who described himself by different titles such as **sandhivigrahika** (minister for peace and war) and **mahadandanayaka** (judicial/military officer).
- The prashasti divides Samudragupta's opponents into four categories:
  - Rulers slain, whose dominions Samudragupta annexed outrightly; '

- 'Frontier' kings, who were forced to pay homage;
- Rulers defeated, but reinstated as tributaries; and
- 'Distant' kings, who acknowledged Samudragupta as an emperor by sending him embassies.

❑ He adopted a different policy for each category:

- In the first category, located in the Ganga-Yamuna doab, he followed a **policy of annexation.** He defeated nine Naga rulers and incorporated their kingdoms into the Gupta empire.
- In the second category, consisting of **neighbouring frontier kingdoms** and **nine republican states of Punjab and western India,** Samudragupta's conquests awed the frontier kings into submission and they agreed to pay tribute and taxes to him and obey his orders without any fight. He conquered the atavika rajyas, that is, forest kingdoms of central India and forced their rulers into servitude.

Samudragupta's Title: His coins include epithets such as parakramah (brave), apratirathah (invincible), vyaghra-parakrama (brave as a tiger), and ashwamedha-parakrama (powerful enough to perform the ashvamedha)

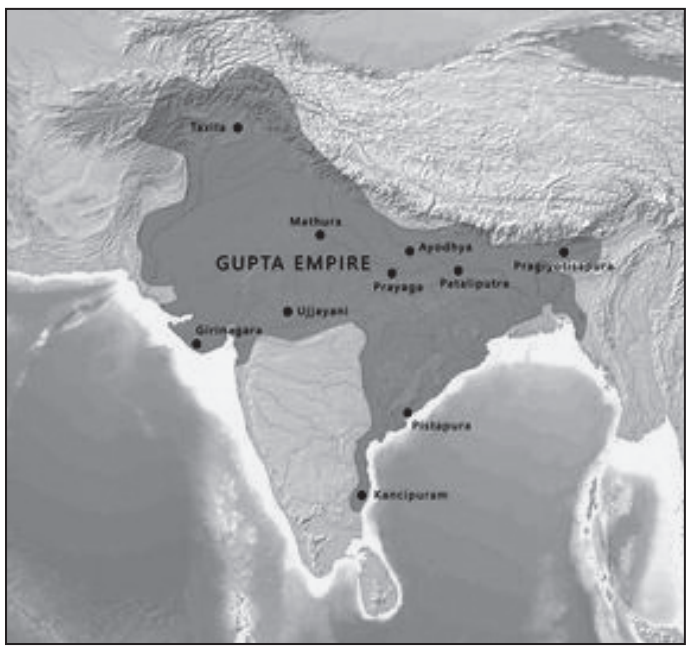


Fig. 11.2: Samudragupta's Empire

❑ **Diplomacy, Administrative Control**

- According to the inscription, Samudragupta exerted direct or indirect control over much of the Indian subcontinent. Samudragupta's empire exerted influence over vast regions, ranging from the **Ganga-Yamuna doab** to **the Pallava kingdom** at Kanchipuram in the southeast, including the last **vestiges of Kushan rule** and the distant territory of present-day Sri Lanka.
- His opponents were categorized based on their submission: outright annexation, forced tribute and homage, reinstatement as tributaries, or acknowledgment as an emperor through embassies.
- The strategic value of the Vindyan forest kingdoms facilitated Samudragupta's expansion to the south along the eastern coast, where he adopted a policy of political conciliation instead of annexation.
- The last vestiges of Kushan rule, like the Shakas, the Murundas, and even the faraway independent territory of Simhala (present day Sri lanka), accepted his suzerainty as well

Cultural Patronage

❑ The emperor celebrated his conquests through an Ashvamedha (horse sacrifice) and issued Ashvamedha coins portraying the sacrificial scene.

Fig. 11.3: Samudragupta's Coins

❑ Samudragupta, also known as **Anukampavan** for his compassion, granted privileges to the Buddhist king of Ceylon and showcased his multifaceted character on coins—depicted as a warrior and a patron of arts and learning. The magnificence of this monastery was described in the 7th-century works of **Hieun Tsang/ Xuanzang.**

❑ His love for music was evident in coins depicting him playing **the veena.** Epithets on his coins, such as **parakrama (brave) and ashwamedha-parakrama** (powerful enough to perform the ashvamedha), underscored his martial and cultural achievements. Despite being Hindu, Samudragupta extended patronage to other religions, exemplified by his association with the **great Buddhist philosopher Vasubandhu**. His reign stands as a remarkable era of military conquest, cultural patronage, and strategic diplomacy in ancient India.

Chandragupta II (c. 376 – 413/15 CE)

Chandragupta II was a capable ruler, who ruled for 40 years from c. 375 to 415 CE. He came to power after a succession struggle with his brother Rama Gupta. Some accounts suggest that Samudragupta's elder son, Ramagupta, briefly assumed the throne but faced challenges due to the invasion of a powerful Shaka king.

Ramagupta was besieged by a Shaka enemy, who demanded Dhruva-devi as part of a peace agreement. Ramagupta agreed to surrender Dhruva-devi to the enemy, but Chandragupta II went to the enemy camp disguised as the queen, and killed the enemy. Chandragupta II defeated the Saka king Rudrasimha III and annexed his kingdom and assumed the title Vikramaditya. It is also said that he killed his brother and married Ramagupta's wife, **Dhruvadevi,** to safeguard the honor and continuity of the Gupta dynasty.

Territorial Extension Under Chandragupta II

- **Western Kshatrapas:**
  - **Chandragupta II, known as Vikramaditya,** achieved significant military successes during his reign, notably against the Western Kshatrapas (Shakas) in west-central India.
  - **Historical and literary** sources suggest that Chandragupta II's victories against the **Shaka-Murundas** were part of a continuous effort initiated by his father**, Samudragupta.**
  - While Samudragupta might have subdued the Shakas to a subordinate alliance, **Chandragupta II** went on to completely subjugate them and conquered western Malwa and Gujarat from the Shaka satraps (one of them was Rudrasimha III).
  - This conquest took the expanse of the Gupta empire to the western sea coast, which was an important region for trade and commerce.
  - The **Western Kshatrapas,** evidenced by their unique coinage, notably disappeared as a significant power in the region during Chandragupta's rule. This disappearance aligns with the hypothesis that Chandragupta II's military campaigns were successful in subduing this power.
- **Punjab:**
  - Chandragupta II's influence extended to the **Punjab region,** and inscriptions in Gupta script found at the Sacred Rock of Hunza (modern-day Pakistan) suggest Gupta military activities in this area.
  - These inscriptions, while mentioning the name Chandra, possibly Chandragupta II, and the courtier Harishena, are considered additional evidence of Gupta military campaigns.
  - The phrase **"seven faces" in the iron pillar inscription**, referring to the mouths of the Indus, hints at Chandragupta's campaign through the **Punjab region.**
  - Also, Inscriptions found at **Shorkot** and coins bearing **Chandragupta's** name reinforce his political sway in this area during the campaign.
- **Bengal:**
  - Chandragupta II's victories are also associated with the **Vanga region** in **Bengal.** The identification of Chandra with Chandragupta II implies that he triumphed in the Vanga region.
  - **Samudragupta's Allahabad Pillar inscription** indicates that the **Samatata kingdom in Bengal** was a Gupta tributary. While the Gupta rule was documented in Bengal during the early sixth century CE, there is a gap in records for the intervening period.
  - Chandragupta II probably annexed a substantial portion of **Bengal to the Gupta Empire,** with control potentially extending into the sixth century. Inscriptions on the Delhi iron pillar suggest that semi-independent **Bengal chiefs resisted Chandragupta's a**ttempts to extend Gupta's influence, highlighting the challenges faced during his expansion in this region.
- **Territorial Expansion through Marriage Alliance:**
  - The peak of the territorial expansion of the Gupta empire was reached during Chandragupta II's reign, who extended the limits of his empire through marital alliances with other royal dynasties of the period.
  - He married **Kuberanaga, the Naga princess,** and had a **daughter, Prabhavati,** with her. Prabhavati was married to **Rudrasena II** of the ruling **Vakataka dynasty** in Deccan.

Cultural Patronage and Intellectual Brilliance

- Chandragupta II, adopting the titles **Vikramaditya** and **Simhavikrama,** demonstrated a keen interest in **cultural** and **intellectual pursuits**.

Fig. 11.4: A Gold Dinar of Chandragupta II

- He was the first Gupta ruler to issue silver coins, alongside copper coins bearing the name Chandra, and **gold coins** known as **dinara**.
- His court at Ujjain flourished with the presence of nine renowned scholars collectively known as the Navaratnas or 'nine gems.'
  - These scholars included **Kalidasa, a** celebrated Sanskrit poet and playwright; **Amarasimha**, a lexicographer and poet; **Varahamihira,** a distinguished mathematician and astrologer; **Dhanvantri,** regarded as the father of Ayurveda; and others excelling in various fields such as sculpture, architecture, grammar, and magic.

Scholar	Contribution
Kalidasa	Renowned classical Sanskrit poet and playwright. His Abhijananashakuntalam, Malavikagnimitram, and Vikramorvasiyam became famous worldwide.
Amarasimha	Sanskrit lexicographer and poet. His 'Amarakosha' is a vocabulary of Sanskrit roots, homonyms, and synonyms. Also called Trikanda, it has three parts with around ten thousand words.
Varahamihira	Renowned mathematician and astrologer. Wrote **Panchasiddhantika,** a treatise on mathematical astronomy summarizing earlier astronomical treatises. Also authored **Brihat Samhita,** covering various topics like astrology, planetary movements, eclipses, and more. **Brihat Jataka** is considered a standard textbook on Vedic astrology.

Scholar	Contribution
Dhanvantri	**Physican who is** considered the father of Ayurveda (knowledge for longevity).
Ghatakarapara	Expert in **sculpture and architecture**.
Shanku	**Architect** who wrote the **Shilpa Shastra**.
Kahapanaka	**Astrologer** who wrote the **Jyothisyashastra**.
Vararuchi	**Grammarian and Sanskrit scholar.** Author of **Prakrit Prakasha**, the first grammar of the Prakrit language.
Vetala Bhatta	**Magician** who wrote the **Mantrashastra**.

- **Fa Hien,** the famous **Chinese traveller,** visited India during Chandragupta II's reign, underscoring the international recognition of Gupta's cultural and intellectual achievements. Chandragupta II's rule is remembered not only for its territorial expansion but also for fostering an environment of intellectual brilliance and cultural patronage in ancient India.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

Explore the cultural patronage of Chandragupta II, emphasizing the significance of intellectual brilliance during his reign. Relate this to present-day cultural and educational policies, considering how leaders foster intellectual development and artistic endeavours for societal progress.

Some other important playwrights:

- **Bhavabhuti:** He was an 8th-century scholar of India noted for his plays and poetry, written in Sanskrit. The works attributed to poet Bhavabhuti were Mahaviracharita (depicting the early life of Rama), Malatimadhava a play based on the romance of Malati and Madhava and Uttararamacharita (depicts Rama's coronation, the abandonment of Sita and their reunion).
- **Hastimalla:** He was 13th century Kannada poet and writer in Hoysala Empire. He wrote Purvapurana.
- **Kshemeshvara** (990 – c. 1070 CE): He was an 11th-century Sanskrit poet from Kashmir in India. One of the important work attributed to him is Dasavatar Charita.

Fa-Hien(399-412CE) and his observation of the Gupta kingdom

- Fa-Hien, a Chinese Buddhist monk, embarked on an extensive journey across India that spanned over 13 years, providing invaluable insights into the socio-cultural landscape of the Gupta era. His travelogue, **"Fo-kwo-ki" or the "Travels of Fa-Hien,"** serves as a crucial literary source for reconstructing the age of the Gupta Empire. During his travels, Fa-Hien explored **Pataliputra** and documented key aspects of the city.
  - In Pataliputra, Fa-Hien noted the existence of two monasteries, Mahayana and Hinayana, underscoring the diversity of Buddhist traditions in the region.
  - His observations shed light on the prosperity of Pataliputra, the presence of an excellent hospital, the existence of rest houses in large cities and along highways, and the prevalence of honesty and law.
  - Interestingly, **Fa-Hien highlighted** the absence of **capital punishment** as a notable characteristic of the Gupta Empire.

Fig. 11.5: Fa Hein

- Fa-Hien's keen observations extended beyond the **administrative** and **social aspects** of the **Gupta Empire.** He documented several facets of the **society,** reflecting its norms and practices. His observations included the prevalence of vegetarianism and non-violence, indicative of ethical and moral considerations.
- Fa-Hien remarked on the persistence of the caste system, with untouchability notably present, where **Chandalas** occupied the **lowest rank.** The existence of slavery was also noted, providing insights into the socio-economic structure of Gupta society.
- Fa-Hien delved into cultural practices, observing that the remarriage of widows was unfavorable in Gupta society. Additionally, he mentioned the prevalence of the Devadasi system, shedding light on religious and cultural practices that integrated spirituality into societal structures.
- His documentation further highlighted the coexistence of **multiple religions** in the Gupta Empire, encompassing **Vaishnavism, Shaivism, Shaktism, Buddhism, Jainism,** and more. Fa-Hien's meticulous observations serve as a valuable resource for understanding the complex tapestry of the Gupta era, offering a nuanced portrayal of the empire's social, cultural, and religious dynamics. His observations included the prevalence of vegetarianism and non-violence, indicative of ethical and moral considerations.

- Fa-Hien remarked on the persistence of the caste system, with untouchability notably present, where Chandalas occupied the lowest rank. The existence of slavery was also noted, providing insights into the socio-economic structure of Gupta society.
- Fa-Hien delved into cultural practices, observing that the remarriage of widows was unfavorable in Gupta society. Additionally, he mentioned the prevalence of the Devadasi system, shedding light on religious and cultural practices that integrated spirituality into societal structures.
- His documentation further highlighted the coexistence of multiple religions in the Gupta Empire, encompassing Vaishnavism, Shaivism, Shaktism, Buddhism, Jainism, and more. Fa-Hien's meticulous observations serve as a valuable resource for understanding the complex tapestry of the Gupta era, offering a nuanced portrayal of the empire's social, cultural, and religious dynamics.

Kumaragupta I (c. 415 – 455 CE)

Kumaragupta I, during his rule from around **415 to 455 CE**, assumed the titles of **Shakraditya and Mahendraditya,** signifying his royal stature. His commitment to religious rituals was evident through the performance of the **Ashvamedha sacrifice,** showcasing his adherence to traditional practices.

Kumaragupta's Territorial Influence and Military Conquests

Evidence of Kumaragupta's territorial reach beyond the core Gupta domain emerges through the discovery of his coins in **present-day Maharashtra,** situated to the **South-west of the Gupta** heartland. Among these finds are 13 coins discovered in Achalpur and a hoard of 1395 silver coins unearthed in Samand, Satara district.

- **Annexation of Dashapura:**
  - The Mandsaur inscription, dating back to **423 CE,** sheds light on Kumaragupta's expansionist endeavors. The inscription refers to a **lineage of kings** with names ending in -varman, possibly associated with Dashapura (modern Mandsaur).
  - Notably, **Nara-varman**, identified as an **"Aulikara"** and part of this dynasty, is mentioned. The inscription diverts briefly to mention the **migration of silk weavers to Dashapura** from the Lata region in **contemporary Gujarat.**
  - Crucially, it asserts the dominion of Kumaragupta over the entire earth during his rule. Furthermore, the inscription notes the construction of a sun temple around 436 CE during the reign of **Nara-varman's grandson, Bandhu-varman.**
  - However, this **temple** faced subsequent destruction or damage by other rulers, prompting the silk weavers' guild to undertake its repair around 473 CE.
- **Challenges on the North-West Frontier**:
  - The latter years of Kumaragupta I's reign were marred by disturbances on the north-west frontier due to the incursion of the Huns from Central Asia.
  - In the mid-5th century, the White Huns, also known as Hepthalites or Ye-tha, gained prominence in the Oxus valley. Their advance included the occupation of **Bactria**, crossing the **Hindukush mountains,** and entering **India by capturing Gandhara.**
- **Resistance Against the Huns: Prince Skandagupta, during his father's reign,** successfully repulsed the initial attack by the Huns, displaying a temporary resilience. However, the Gupta Empire faced continued challenges as successive waves of Hun invasions weakened its stability, ultimately contributing significantly to the empire's disintegration.

Cultural Developments:

- **Founding Nalanda University:** A notable achievement of Kumaragupta I's reign was the establishment of Nalanda University, situated near present-day Patna. This academic institution would later become a renowned center of learning, contributing significantly to India's intellectual heritage.

Nalanda University: An Ancient Learning Hub

Nalanda University, celebrated as one of history's earliest great institutions, stands as a monumental **Buddhist monastery** in the **ancient kingdom of Magadha, Bihar, India**. Attracting major monks, particularly those practicing **Mahayana Buddhism** like **Asnaga and Vasubandhu,** Nalanda University offered teachings on various Buddhist sects. Its curriculum extended beyond religious studies to encompass secular disciplines such as grammar, logic, epistemology, and science.

Fig. 11.6: Nalanda University

- **Infrastructure and Library:** The university's remarkable infrastructure includes ten temples, meditation centers, and the world's largest library, divided into three buildings - Ratnasagar, Ratna Dadhi, and Ratna Ranjak. This vast repository housed religious manuscripts, literature, astrology, philosophy, science, and more.

- **Eminent Scholars and Intellectual Vibrancy:** Nalanda was home to renowned scholars such as **Nagarjuna** and **Aryabhatta.** The institution witnessed lively debates and discussions, with King Harsha inviting a thousand educated monks for a philosophical meeting.
- **International Recognition and Chinese Travelers:** Beyond **Indian borders**, Nalanda gained international recognition, attracting Chinese travellers like Hiuen Tsang, who spent two years studying there.

- **Religious Diversity under Kumaragupta:**
  - Epigraphic evidence suggests a rich tapestry of religions thriving during Kumaragupta I's rule, encompassing **Shaivism, Vaishnavism, Buddhism, and Jainism**. The Gupta ruler's era witnessed a pluralistic religious environment.
  - **Kumaragupta's silver coins** portray his devotion to the **god Vishnu,** identifying him as a **"parama-bhagavata"** or fervent devotee.
  - The representation extends to his **gold, silver, and copper coins,** where the image of Vishnu's mount**, Garuda,** is prominently featured.
  - Additionally, Kumaragupta expressed devotion to the **war god Karttikeya, also known as Skanda.** Depictions on his coins illustrate Karttikeya seated on **a peacock**, symbolizing the ruler's reverence for this deity. Notably, Kumaragupta named his son Skandagupta, drawing inspiration from the god's name.
- **Nalanda's Buddhist Connection:**
  - According to Buddhist sources like Xuanzang (7th century) and Prajnavarman (8th century), the famed **Nalanda mahavihara** was founded by a monarch identified as Shakraditya.
  - Subsequent records by **Xuanzang** mention **Budhagupta, a successor of Kumaragupta II**. These kings, including **Shakraditya,** contributed to the enrichment of the monastery through endowments. However, this connection raises questions about whether Shakraditya aligns with Kumaragupta I, introducing a degree of uncertainty in historical identification.
- **Coins:**
  - **Kumaragupta I, also known as "Mahendraditya"** on his coinage, holds a distinctive position in Gupta history for issuing the most extensive variety of coins among Gupta rulers.
  - He minted a remarkable 14 different types of gold (Dinar) and silver (Denaree) coins.

Fig. 11.7: Kumargupta's Coins

Fig. 11.8: Garuda type of coins of Kumargupta

- Among the diverse coin types, the **Archer type** portrays the king standing with a **bow** and **arrow,** symbolizing strength.
- The **Swordsman** Type features the king holding a sword, accompanied by a Brahmi legend praising Kumaragupta.
- The Asvamedha Type, crafted in honor of the Horse Sacrifice, bears legends commemorating the event. The Horsemen Type exhibits the king on **horseback,** adorned with victory inscriptions. The Lion Slayer and Tiger Slayer types showcase the king's prowess in defeating these formidable creatures.

Historical Records

- The **Bilsad inscription is** the oldest historical record from **Kumaragupta I's reign**, dating to Gupta year 96 (415 CE).
- Additional inscriptions from this period include the **Karandanda, Mandsor,** and **Damodar Copper plate inscriptions**.
- Notably, the **Damodar Copper plate inscription** sheds light on the economic aspects of Kumaragupta's rule, revealing that trade guilds operated as financial institutions for advancing loans and receiving deposits.

Skandagupta's Reign (c. 455 – 467 CE)

Skandagupta, ascending to the Gupta throne around 455 CE, faced a significant challenge during his reign—the incursion of the Huns. The Indo-Hephthalites also recognized as the White Huns or Hunas, launched an invasion into India from the northwest, making significant advances that extended as far as the Indus River.

Military Expeditions by Skandagupta

- The **Bhitari pillar inscription** attests to Skandagupta's successful resistance against this **Hephthalite incursion**, marking a crucial victory in the defense of the Gupta Empire.
- Demonstrating strategic prowess and military acumen, Skandagupta successfully repulsed the **Hun invasion**, securing a pivotal victory for the Gupta Empire.
- This triumph is prominently highlighted in the **Junagadh/ Girnar inscription** from his reign, immortalizing the defense of the empire against external threats.
- In acknowledgment of his accomplishments and the resilience displayed against the Huns, Skandagupta adopted the prestigious title of Vikramaditya, a designation associated with great kings and conquerors

in Indian history.

Public work By Skandagupta: Beyond the military exploits, Skandagupta's administration included notable civic initiatives. The inscription records his governor **Parnadatta's commendable** effort in restoring the **Sudarshan lake**, showcasing the Gupta commitment to infrastructure and public welfare.

Coins:

- Compared to his predecessors, Samudragupta produced fewer **gold coins,** and some of them have less gold in them. Although it cannot be confirmed, it is possible that the **state treasury** was straining due to the numerous wars he fought.
- **Five distinct varieties of gold coins** were released by Skandagupta: **the Archer, King and Queen, Chhatra, Lion-slayer, and Horseman types**.
- There are four types of his silver coins: the Garuda, Bull, Altar, and Madhyadesha types.

However, despite these commendable efforts and victories, the Gupta Empire experienced a shift in its political dynamics. The central control gradually weakened, paving the way for local governors to assume greater autonomy. These regional leaders transformed into feudatory kings with hereditary rights, marking a transformation in the political landscape of the Gupta realm. While the Gupta Empire endured, the era witnessed a decentralization of power and a transition toward more localized governance structures.

Later Guptas

Later Gupta kings included Purugupta, Kumaragupta II, Budhagupta, Narasimhagupta, Kumaragupta III, and Vishnugupta.

THE DECLINE OF THE GUPTAS

Under Skandagupta's rule, the Gupta Empire began to decline. Chandragupta II's grandson was Skandagupta. Skandagupta's retaliatory actions caused his empire to be depleted of wealth and resources. Vishnugupta was the final recognized king of the Gupta Empire. Between 540 and 550 AD, Vishnugupta ruled. The factors responsible for the decline:

- **Huna Invasions and Skandagupta's Resistance:** The decline of the Gupta Empire was exacerbated by the formidable **Huna invasions**. Skandagupta, the Gupta ruler in the early 5th century, notably repulsed the Huna's initial advances into Indian territories. However, **weak successors** in the latter half of the century struggled to contain the growing Huna power, leading to significant territorial losses.
- **Toramana's Conquest and Mihirkula's Tyranny:**
  - In the aftermath of **Skandagupta's reign,** the Huna chief Toramana seized control of vast regions in western India, extending up to **Eran near Bhopal in central India**. By 485 CE, the Huns, under Toramana, occupied present-day Punjab, Rajasthan, Kashmir, eastern Malwa, and substantial parts of central India.
  - Toramana's son, Mihirkula, succeeded him and became a notorious tyrant, infamous for his **cruelty** and **persecution of Buddhists**.
  - Although he faced defeat at the hands of **Yashodharman of Malwa**, Narasimhagupta Baladitya of the Gupta dynasty, and the Maukharis in 515 CE, this victory did not lead to the revival of the Gupta Empire.
- **Rise of Feudatories and Yashodharman's Challenge:**
  - A pivotal factor in the Gupta decline was the rise of feudatories, notably exemplified by Yashodharman of Malwa.
  - Yashodharman, belonging to the Aulikara feudatory family, challenged Gupta authority and declared his conquest through 532 pillars of victory.
  - Despite the short-lived nature of Yashodharman's rule, it significantly damaged the Gupta Empire's reputation, inspiring other feudatories to rebel and declare independence across regions like **Bihar, Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Vallabhi, Gujarat, and western Malwa.**
- **Economic Decline and Feudal Tendencies:**
  - The economic prosperity of the Gupta Empire witnessed a gradual decline, evident in the reduced gold content of later Gupta rulers' coins.
  - Coinage became less prevalent, with kings resorting to land grants as a form of payment, indicating diminished central government control.
  - The loss of western India further impacted revenues from foreign trade, as seen in the migration of silk weavers from Gujarat to Malwa in 473 CE.(As stated in Mandsour Inscriptions)
- **Emergence of New Dynasties:** The decline of the Gupta Empire paved the way for the ascent of new ruling dynasties in various parts of northern India. The **Pushyabhutis of Thanesar, Maukharis of Kanauj, and Maitrakas of Vallabhi** emerged as prominent regional powers. Simultaneously, the Chalukyas and Pallavas rose to prominence in the Deccan and northern Tamil Nadu, shaping the complex political landscape of post-Gupta India.

As the sixth century commenced, the Gupta Empire had already begun to fall apart, leaving numerous local chieftains in control.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

Investigate the economic policies of the Gupta Empire, particularly the shift in foreign trade dynamics with the decline in demand for Indian silk. How might historical trade shifts during the Gupta period have parallels in the global economic landscape of today?

DIFFERENT ASPECTS UNDER GUPTA'S RULE

During the Gupta Empire, spanning from the 4th to the 6th century CE, India witnessed a flourishing era marked by advancements in administration, a thriving economy, and rich cultural and religious developments.

Kumaramatya

- Six Vaishali seals have the term "kumaramatya" on them, meaning that this title denoted a high-ranking official who had his own office (adikarana).
- Several Bita seals bear the designation "amatya," and the "kumaramatya" seems to have been the most important of the amatyas, having a status comparable to royal princes. The king, crown prince, revenue department, or a province were all associated with Kumaramatyas.

Gupta Administration

- **Royal Titles and Succession:** In contrast to the Mauryas, Gupta kings adopted grandiose titles such as paramesvara, maharajadhiraja, and paramabhattaraka, symbolizing their dominion over lesser kings within the empire. The hereditary nature of kingship lacked a firm **practice of primogeniture,** introducing uncertainties in succession. The throne did not invariably pass to the eldest son, enabling chiefs and officials to exploit these uncertainties to their advantage.
- **Administrative Structure:** The Gupta bureaucracy, less elaborate than the Mauryas, featured significant officials known as kumaramatyas. These officers, possibly recruited from diverse varnas due to the Gupta rulers' likely Vaishya background, may have received cash payments. However, the consolidation of multiple offices in individual hands, coupled with hereditary posts, weakened royal control.

Administrative Level	Governing Authority
Bhuktis	Uparika
Vishyas	Ayuktas or Vishyapatis
Vithis	Vithi
Grams	Gramika

- **Provincial and Local Administration:** The Guptas organized a provincial and local administration, dividing the empire into bhuktis, each overseen by an Uparika. Bhuktis were subdivided into vishayas, headed by vishayapatis. In eastern India, visayas are further divided into vithis and villages.
- **Village Administration and Guilds:** The importance of the **village headman** increased during the Gupta times, with local elements involved in **village affairs.** Guilds, especially in urban areas, played a significant role, as evidenced by corporate bodies of artisans, merchants, and scribes. Artisans and bankers maintained separate guilds, enjoying certain immunities.

Designation	Responsibilities
Mantri Mukhya	Prime Minister
Sandhivigrahika	Minister in Charge of Peace and War; responsible for contact and correspondence with other states, initiating wars, and concluding alliances and treaties.
Akshapataladhikrita	Minister in Charge of Records
Mahabaladhikrita	Minister in Charge of the Military
Mahadandanayaka or Dandanayaka	Senior Judicial; responsible for overseeing the judiciary and legal matters.

- **Legal System and Guilds:**
  - The Gupta period witnessed a developed **judicial system,** marked by the compilation of several law books.
  - **Civil** and **criminal laws** were distinctly defined, encompassing offenses like **theft** and **adultery.**

The adhikarana (office) of the **dandapashika** is mentioned in the Vaishali seal; this could have been a district police station.

  - **Laws,** often based on **varnas,** were upheld by the king with the assistance of Brahmana priests.
  - **Guilds of artisans, merchants**, and others operated with their own laws, contributing to the flourishing urban administration.
- **Military Structure and Tactics:** Details on the numerical strength of the Gupta army are unavailable, but the king maintained a standing army supplemented by forces from feudatories. Chariots declined, and cavalry, particularly horse archery, gained prominence in military tactics.
- **Feudatory Princes and Fiscal Concessions:**
  - A substantial part of the Gupta Empire was held by feudatory chiefs, often subjugated by Samudragupta. These vassals offered homage, paid tribute, and provided **daughters in marriage** in exchange for charters granting them rule.
  - The Gupta rulers granted fiscal and administrative concessions to **priests and administrators,** a practice that originated with the Satavahanas and became regular in Gupta times.
- **Feudal and Beneficiary System:**
  - The Gupta political system exhibited feudal characteristics, with numerous tributary princes. Feudal development involving grants to priests and administrators.

- Religious functionaries received tax-free land and the authority to collect taxes from peasants.
- This decentralized administration , managed by feudatories and beneficiaries, reduced the need for an extensive bureaucratic apparatus, distinguishing the Gupta political system from the elaborate administrative machinery of Maurya times.

Economy

❑ **Trade and Commerce:**
- During the **Gupta period,** the economic life of the people can be gleaned from accounts by travellers like **Fa-hien.**
- Magadha, a prominent region, boasted numerous cities with **wealthy inhabitants** who actively supported **Buddhism** and engaged in **charitable activities.**
- However, a notable shift occurred in foreign trade. Up until around **550 AD,** India had trade relations with the Eastern Roman Empire, exporting silk.
- The decline in demand for **Indian silk abroad** began around this time when the Eastern Roman Empire acquired silk-growing knowledge from the Chinese, adversely impacting India's export trade.
- The towns Ghantasala, Kadura and Chaul were well known as ports handling foreign trade.

❑ **Economic Policies and Taxation:**
- **Land taxes** multiplied, while taxes on trade and commerce decreased. The king likely collected taxes ranging from one-fourth to one-sixth of the produce.
- **Peasants** were obliged to provide for the royal army's maintenance during its passage through the countryside, including animals, food grains, and other necessities.
- Vishti (forced labour) was considered a source of income for the State, a sort of tax paid by the people.

❑ **Migration of Silk Weavers:**
- In the middle of the fifth century, a guild of silk weavers migrated from their original home in western India (Lata) to Mandasor.
- Interestingly, upon arrival, they abandoned their original occupation of silk weaving and transitioned to other professions.
- This migration reflects changes in the economic landscape and demand for specific goods during the Gupta era.

❑ **Emergence of Priestly Landlords:** A significant economic development during the Gupta period was the rise of priestly landlords at the expense of local peasants. Land grants made to priests led to the cultivation of new areas, but these grants were often imposed on local tribal peasants, resulting in a decline in their status. In regions like central and western India, peasants were subjected to forced labor, highlighting the social and economic transformations underway.

❑ **Agriculture Land measurement:** The term 'vap' means 'to sow'. There were various texts and inscriptions used for land measurement during the Gupta period.
- The terms for short distances were- The angula (approx 34 inch). The hasta (cubit) was the standardized distance between the tip of the elbow and the middle finger (18 inches).
- The terms for large distances were- Adhavapa (3/8-1/2 acre), Dronavapa (11/2-2 acres),Kulyavapa (12-16 acres).
- The 'Kulyavapa' was the area required to sow one kulya of grain and the 'Dronavapa' was the area required to sow one Drona of grain.
- Such a large number of land measure terms indicates that there was no single standard set of measurement and that different measures were current in different regions.

Thus the account of economy provides insights into the changes and challenges faced by the Gupta Empire during its zenith.

Social Dynamics

❑ **Brahmana Supremacy and Land Grants**:
- Land grants to the Brahmanas on a large scale underscore the continuation of Brahmana supremacy during the Gupta era. Originally vaisyas, the Guptas were now regarded as Kshatriyas by the Brahmanas. The Brahmanas portrayed Gupta kings with God-like attributes, and the Gupta princes became staunch supporters of the Brahmanical order. This support contributed to the accumulation of wealth by Brahmanas through extensive land grants, leading to the assertion of various privileges listed in the law book of Narada.

❑ **Caste Proliferation:** The caste system experienced proliferation during the Gupta period due to two main factors.
- Firstly, the **assimilation of numerous foreigners into Indian society** resulted in each group of foreigners being recognized as a Hindu caste, especially if they arrived as conquerors. For example, the **Hunas**, who appeared in India in the late fifth century, eventually became one of the thirty-six clans of the Rajputs.
- The second factor contributing to the increase in castes was the **absorption of many tribal peoples** into Brahmanical society through land grants. Tribal chiefs were attributed respectable origins, while the rest of the tribal people were assigned a lower status, effectively transforming each tribe into a caste within Hindu society.

❑ **Changes in Shudras and Women's Position:** The Gupta period witnessed some improvements in the status of Sudras (workers and cultivators) and women.
- Shudras and women were now allowed to listen to the epics and Puranas, and they could worship a new deity named Krishna.

- By the seventh century, Shudras were mainly portrayed as agriculturists, a shift from their earlier roles as servants, slaves, and agricultural labourers for the three higher varnas.

❑ **Rise of Untouchables:** While certain sections of society saw positive changes, the Gupta period also witnessed an increase in the number of untouchables, particularly the **chandalas**.

- The chandalas had been present in society since the fifth century BCE, and by the fifth century AD, their population had grown significantly.
- **Fa-hsien,** a Chinese pilgrim, observed that chandalas lived outside villages, engaging in meat and flesh trade. Their presence was deemed polluting, leading to social distance from upper-caste individuals whenever they entered towns.

This multifaceted social landscape reflects the complexities and transformations within Gupta society during this period.

Some Important Information

Mitakshara and Dayabhaga system of inheritance

❑ Mitakshara is the oldest schools of Hindu law and is practiced in India except in the state of West Bengal and Assam. Dayabhaga is also important schools of Hindu law mainly practiced in Assam & West Bengal. Both law deals with upper and lower castes.

❑ In the Mitakshara school of inheritance, property is inherited by the successors (coparceners) only when they were born in the family of the property holder thus when a son is born, he receives right in the property. So he can inherit during the lifetime of a father. In the case of Dayabhaga school of inheritance, property is inherited by the successors (coparceners) only when the holder of the property is dead.

❑ Both Mitakshara and Dayabhaga deals with male and female property rights. Mitakshara school is orthodox school .It is biased against women & gave them very less right to inherit property. Dayabhaga is also biased, but it is a liberal school and it gives more rights to women to inherit property compared to Mitakshara.

Religion

❑ **Buddhism's Decline:** In contrast to the royal patronage Buddhism received during the reigns of Asoka and Kanishka, Buddhism no longer enjoyed such favor in the Gupta period.

- Fa-hsien's observations might suggest a flourishing state of Buddhism, but its significance diminished, especially in the region of Magadha. While Fa-hsien provides a positive portrayal, the reality is that Buddhism was not as influential during the Gupta era as it had been in earlier times.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

Discuss the role of women and Sudras during the Gupta period, emphasising the improvements in their status. To what extent have these historical shifts influenced gender and caste dynamics in present-day India?

❑ **Ascendance of Brahmanism:** Brahmanism took centre stage during the Gupta period, with the worship of two principal deities, Vishnu and Siva.

- VaishaVishnu became the god of devotion, depicted as the savior of the Varna system. Numerous legends surrounded Vishnu, leading to the compilation of the Vishnupurana and the formulation of the Vishnusmriti, a law book named after the deity. The renowned Vaishnava scripture, Bhagavadgita, emerged in the fourth century A.D., emphasizing devotion to Lord Krishna and the importance of adhering to the assigned functions of each varna.

❑ **Worship of Siva:** While a few Gupta kings were worshippers of Siva, the god of destruction, Siva's prominence came later, and initially, he did not hold the same importance as Vishnu during the early phase of Gupta rule.

❑ **Introduction of Idol Worship and Festivals:** The Gupta period witnessed a significant shift in Hinduism with the introduction of idol worship in temples, marking a departure from earlier practices. The era also saw the celebration of various festivals. Agricultural festivals, initially observed by different classes, were imbued with religious significance, evolving into lucrative sources of income for priests.

❑ **Gupta Policy of Tolerance:** Gupta kings pursued a policy of religious tolerance, refraining from persecuting followers of Buddhism and Jainism. This tolerance can be attributed, in part, to the changing character of Buddhism, which had assimilated many features of Hinduism. The absence of recorded instances of persecution reflects a period of relative religious harmony during the Gupta rule.

Fig. 11.9: Nar Narayan at Deogarh

Vaishnavism: A Brief Historical Overview

- In the **Early Vedic period,** Vishnu was considered a **minor god** and associated with the Sun in the Rig Veda.
- Vishnu gained prominence in the Later Vedic period alongside Brahma and Shiva.
- By the **2nd century BC**, Vishnu merged with the **non-Vedic tribal god Narayana,** becoming Narayana-Vishnu, with worshippers known as **Bhagavatas**.
- The **Chandogya Upanishad** introduced the earliest reference to **Lord Krishna,** presenting him as the son of Devaki and a disciple of Ghora Angiresa.
- The **Mahabharata** equated Krishna with Vishnu, leading to the amalgamation of followers into Bhagavatism or Vaishnavism around 200 BC.
- Bhagavatism emphasized Bhakti and Ahimsa, attracting followers from diverse backgrounds, including foreigners, artisans, and merchants.
- The **Bhagavad Gita, Vishnu Purana, and Vishnu Smriti** conveyed Vaishnava teachings, promoting inclusivity for women, Vaishyas, and Sudras.
- Vaishnavism gained prominence over Mahayana Buddhism during Gupta times, advocating the doctrine of incarnation (avataras) to restore societal order in times of crisis.
- By the 6th century AD, Vishnu joined the trinity of Gods with Shiva and Brahma.
- The Bhagavata Purana, composed to popularize Vishnu worship, and religious recitations like Vishnusahasranama contributed to Vaishnavism's continued popularity.
- In South India, Vaishnavism thrived with the influence of **Alwars**, saint poets who composed devotional songs.
- **Garuda** was used as the royal emblem of the Guptas.
- Sri Ranganathamuni, popularly known as Sriman Nathamuni, was a Vaishnava theologian who collected and compiled the Nalayira Divya Prabandham.

Shaivism A Brief Historical Overview:

- Shaivism, rooted in the worship of Lord Shiva, has a rich history with notable developments over different periods in ancient India.
- The term 'Siva' signifies auspiciousness.
- The **Rig Veda** lacks direct references to Shiva. In later Vedic times, Rudra is recognized as the god of destruction.
- The **earliest mention of Shiva** is found in the **Svetasvatara Upanishad,** leading to the equating of Rudra with Shiva.
- **Megasthenes** notes that the Surasenis of Mathura worshipped **Dionysus**, identified with Shiva.
- Shiva gains popularity, reflected in coins of Shaka, Parthian, Kushana rulers, and Republican states depicting Shiva.
- Shiva's prominence grows in the Gupta era, with emperors like **Kumaragupta and Skandagupta** promoting Shaivism. Kalidasa is noted as a Shiva devotee.
- **Harasavardhana**, a Shiva, Surya, and Buddha devotee, emerges.
- **Huna** rulers Toromana and Mihirakula also show devotion to Shiva and Surya.
- **Pallavas and Cholas** in South India patronize Shaivism. Nayanars or Adayars, Shiva bhakti saints, contribute to its popularity with devotional songs. Prominent Nayanars include Apar, Sambandar, Sundarati, Manikkavasagar, Tirumullur, and Sekkilar.
- Over time, various Shaiva sub-orders like Pasupatas, Kapalikas, Kalamukhas, and Virshaivism surface.

Art and Architecture

Often referred to as the "Golden Age" of ancient India, the Gupta period was characterized by remarkable achievements in art and culture. While some northern towns experienced economic decline, the Guptas, possessing substantial gold resources, issued an extensive number of gold coins.

Fig. 11.10: Bhitargaon Temple, UP

- **Patronage of Art and Literature:** Both Samudragupta and Chandragupta II were notable patrons of art and literature. Samudragupta is depicted playing the lute on his coins, showcasing a connection between rulers and artistic expression. Chandragupta II is credited with maintaining a court adorned with nine luminaries or eminent scholars.
- **Influence of Religion on Art:** In ancient India, art was predominantly inspired by religion. Buddhism played a crucial role in fostering art during the Maurya and post-Maurya periods, leading to the creation of monumental stone pillars, intricate caves, and towering stupas. Stupas, characterised by dome-like structures on round bases, were adorned with numerous Buddha images.

Rock-cut Caves in the Gupta Period

- The rock-cut caves of the Gupta period maintained traditional forms while introducing notable changes in façade ornamentation and pillar designs.
- Key locations for these caves include Ajanta and Ellora in Maharashtra, as well as Bagh in Madhya Pradesh, and Udaygiri in Orissa.

Structural Temples of Gupta Era

- Gupta period structural temples can be categorised into five groups:
  1. Flat-Roofed Square Temples
  2. Flat-roofed square Temples with Vimana (Second Storey)
  3. Square Temples with Curvilinear Towers (Sikhara)
  4. Rectangular Temples
  5. Circular Temples
- The second group exhibits Dravida style characteristics, while the third group is notable for introducing the 'Sikhara' atop the sanctum sanctorium, a key feature of the Nagara style.
- Gupta Period temple also exhibited **panchayatana style** of temple construction.

Stupas in Gupta Architecture

- While stupas were constructed in abundance during the Gupta period, the most noteworthy examples are found at Sarnath in Uttar Pradesh, Ratnagiri in Orissa, and Mirpur Khan in Sindh.

- **Sculpture:** Sculpture in ancient India showcased remarkable diversity, with distinct forms emerging in both stone and metal.
  - **Stone Sculpture:**
    - One exemplary piece is the **erect Buddha from Sarnath**, renowned for its artistic finesse and spiritual resonance.
    - Among brahmanical images, the Great Boar (Varaha) at the entrance of a cave in Udayagiri stands out for its immediate and imposing presence.
  - **Metal Statues:**
    - The Gupta craftsmen mastered the art of casting statues on a large scale using the **cire-perdue (lost-wax) process**.
    - Noteworthy among these creations is a colossal copper image of the Buddha, soaring to a height of approximately eighteen feet, located in Nalanda, Bihar.
    - Another remarkable metal statue is the Sultanganj Buddha, measuring seven-and-a-half feet, attesting to the craftsmen's skill and proficiency in metalwork.

Fig. 11.11: Sarnath Buddha

- **Bronze and Copper Buddha Images:** During the Gupta period, notable Buddha images emerged, including a bronze image over two meters high discovered in Sultanganj near Bhagalpur. Fa-hsien reported a copper Buddha image over 25 meters high, although its current whereabouts are unknown. Sarnath and Mathura produced beautiful Buddha images. However, the pinnacle of Buddhist art during the Gupta era is represented by the Ajanta paintings, showcasing lifelike depictions of events in Gautama Buddha's life and the stories of previous Buddhas.
- **Introduction of Hindu Gods:** Despite being patrons of Brahmanism, the Gupta period saw the introduction of images of Hindu gods like Vishnu and Siva. Pantheons depicted the chief god prominently, surrounded by retainers and subordinate gods on the same panel, reflecting clear social hierarchies.
- **Architectural Endeavors:** While the Gupta period was relatively poor in architecture, a few temples, primarily made of brick, were constructed in Uttar Pradesh. Notable examples include the brick temples of Bhitargaon in Kanpur, Bhitari in Ghazipur, and Deogarh in Jhansi. The Buddhist university at Nalanda, established in the fifth century, featured early brick structures during this period.

Fig. 11.12: Ajanta Painting of Apsara

- **Terracotta and Pottery:**
  - **Dual Roles:** In ancient times, clay figurines served dual roles in religious and secular contexts, featuring deities such as Vishnu, Kartikeya, Surya, Durga, Kubera, and Nagas. These figurines held significance in various cultural practices.
  - **Location:** Additionally, evidence of exceptional Gupta pottery has been unearthed at Ahichchhatra, Rajgath, Hastinapur, and Bashar.
  - **Red Ware Pottery:** The predominant pottery style during this period is identified as 'red ware,' showcasing the high level of craftsmanship achieved during the Gupta era.

Literature

- **Secular Literary Productions:** The Gupta period stands out for its remarkable contributions to secular literature. Among the notable literary figures, Bhasa wrote 13 plays during this era. However, the true luminary of Gupta literature is Kalidasa, renowned for his masterpiece, "Abhijnanasakuntalam," considered one of the world's finest literary works. Kalidasa's works, including **"Abhijnanasakuntalam,"** were among the earliest Indian writings translated into European languages.

- **Gupta Period Plays:** Distinctive features of plays during the Gupta period include their exclusively comedic nature, with no tragic counterparts. Another notable characteristic is the differentiated language use based on class and gender; characters from higher and lower classes, as well as women and Sudras, employ Prakrit in these plays.
- **Religious Literary Expansion:** Religious literature experienced a surge during the Gupta period, marked by a profound religious bias in most works. The compilation of the two great epics, the "Ramayana" and the "Mahabharata," likely occurred in the fourth century AD.
  - The "**Ramayana**" narrates the story of Rama, emphasising family values and portraying the triumph of righteousness over evil.
  - The "**Mahabharata**" unfolds a tale of conflict between the Kauravas and the Pandavas, illustrating the victory of righteousness.
- **Bhagavadgita and Puranas:** Integral to the "Mahabharata," the "Bhagavadgita" imparts essential teachings, emphasizing the performance of duties without attachment to rewards. The compilation of Puranas, following the narrative style of the epics, aimed at educating and edifying the common people through myths, legends, and sermons.
- **Development of Sanskrit Grammar:** The Gupta period witnessed advancements in Sanskrit grammar based on the works of Panini and Patanjali. Noteworthy is the compilation of the "Amarakosa" by Amarasimha, a luminary in Chandragupta II's court. This lexicon became a fundamental learning tool for Sanskrit students taught in the traditional manner.
- **Ornate Sanskrit Style and Emphasis on Verse:** Characterized by an ornate style, distinct from classical Sanskrit, the Gupta period literature showcased a shift towards greater emphasis on verse over prose.
  - The era also introduced a few commentaries. Sanskrit emerged as the court language of the Guptas, and while Brahmanical religious literature flourished, the period also marked the inception of secular literary works, contributing to a bright phase in classical literature.

Subject	Writers	Works
Drama	Kalidasa	Vikramovarshiya, Malavikagnimitram, Raghuvamsa, Ritusamharam, Meghadutam, Abhigyan Shakuntalam
	Bhasa	Swapnavasavadatta, Charudatta, Pratignayagandharayana
	Vishakhadatta	Mudrarakshasa, Devichandraguptam
	Shudraka	Mrichchakatika
Ecology	Harisena	Prayag Prasasti
Grammar	Dandin	**Kavyadarshana, Dasakumarcharita**
	Amarsimha	Amarakosha
	Chandragomin	**Chandra Vyakarana**
Narrative Story	Vishnu Sharma	Panchatantra
Philosophy	Ishwar Krishna	Sankhya Karika (Samkhya Philosophy)
	Prasasti Pada	Dharma Sangraha (Vaisheshika Philosophy)
	Acharya Vyasa	Vyasa Bhashya (Nyaya Philosophy)
	Vatsyayana	Vyasa Bhashya (Nyaya Philosophy)
Miscellaneous Works	Vatsyayana	Kamasutra

Science and Technology

Gupta period witnessed some significant developments in diverse fields of Science and technology

- **Mathematics:** During the Gupta period, **Aryabhata**, a mathematician from Pataliputra, wrote the **"Aryabhatiya,"** showcasing expertise in various mathematical calculations. An inscription from 448 CE in the Allahabad district suggests the knowledge of the decimal system in India by the early 5th century AD.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

Analyse the literary contributions of the Gupta period, particularly the secular and religious works. How have these ancient literary works shaped the cultural and intellectual identity of India, and are there modern parallels in literary achievements?

- **Astronomy:** In astronomy, the compilation of "**Romaka Sidhanta**" took place during this era. Influenced by Greek ideas, the name itself suggests the connection to Western astronomical concepts.
- **Craftsmanship:** Gupta craftsmen excelled in working with iron and bronze. Notably, **bronze images of the Buddha** were produced on a considerable scale due to advancements in iron technology. The iron pillar found at Delhi near Mehrauli, dating back to the fourth century A.D., serves as an outstanding example. Despite its age, the pillar has not rusted over the

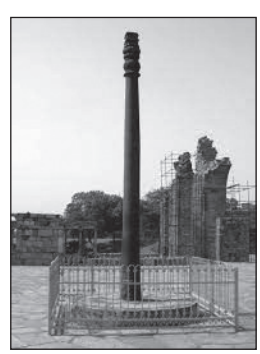


Fig. 11.13: Iron pillar at Delhi

subsequent 15 centuries, attesting to the remarkable technological skill of the craftsmen.

Eminent Personalities during Gupta Period

Aryabhatta I:

- Aryabhatta I, residing in Pataliputra, stands as the Father of Algebra and an eminent astronomer from this era.
- His notable works, **the Aryabhatiya and Aryabhatasiddhanta,** are pivotal astronomical texts.
- Aryabhatta's groundbreaking contributions include the discovery of the Earth's rotation, accurate planetary orbit calculations, and a precise estimate of the year's length.
- He scientifically explained eclipses, introduced sine functions, **invented zero,** recommended the **decimal system,** and provided an accurate value for pi (π).

Varahamihira

- **Varahamihira,** a 6th-century polymath and one of **Chandragupta II's navratnas**, hailed from Avanti.
- His significant works, the **Panchasiddhantika** and **Brihatsamhita,** summarize five astronomical schools and cover diverse topics like astrology, meteorology, and precious metals.
- **Brihatsamhita,** an encyclopedic work, delves into topics ranging from agriculture to meteorology, showcasing Varahamihira's extensive knowledge.

Brahmagupta: Mathematician and Astronomer

- Brahmagupta, a late **6th/7th-century mathematician**, made substantial contributions to geometry.
- In his works like **Brahmasputasiddhanta** and **Khandakhadyaka,** he hinted at the Law of Gravitation and covered topics like planetary longitudes, eclipses, and perpetual motion.
- Brahmagupta introduced formulae for cyclic quadrilaterals, advancing mathematical understanding during this era.

Māhāvīrācharya: 9th-century Mathematician

- Mahavira, a 9th-century mathematician from Karnataka, authored the **Ganitasarasangraha**, addressing various mathematical problems.

Bhaskara II: Mathematician of the 12th Century

- Bhaskara II, a mathematician from the 12th century, **authored Lilavati,** containing essential ideas of calculus. His work exemplifies the continued evolution of mathematical thought in later centuries.

Vagbhata: Ayurvedic Physician

- Vagbhata, a disciple of Charaka, distinguished himself as a physician in the Ayurvedic system. His works Ashtangahridaya and Ashtangasamgraha are significant contributions to Ayurveda.

Maharishi Palakapya: Author of Hastayurveda

- Maharishi Palakapya wrote the Hastyayurveda, focusing on the diagnosis and treatment of major diseases in elephants through medication and surgery.

Dhanvantri: Knowledgeable Ayurvedic Practitioner

- **Dhanvantri** gained fame for his extensive knowledge of Ayurveda, contributing to the advancements in traditional Indian medicine. He wrote a book named Navantikam.

Kashyapa: 7th-century Physician

- Kashyapa, a 7th-century physician, compiled Ayurvedic knowledge, specifically addressing diseases affecting women and children.

Sushruta: Surgeon and Medical Pioneer

- Sushruta, renowned for the Sushruta Samhita, made pioneering contributions to surgery. His work Sushruta Samhita covered diverse surgical procedures, including plastic surgery, demonstrating a comprehensive understanding of human anatomy through dissection.

IGNITE YOUR MIND

In what ways has ancient Indian medical knowledge influenced traditional medicine practices in present-day India, and how does it connect to the global discourse on healthcare?

CONCLUSION

The Gupta age was a remarkable period in ancient Indian history, often called the **Golden Age**. During their rule, the Guptas made significant contributions to various fields, including literature, science, and art. The empire witnessed a flourishing of knowledge and creativity, with scholars like **Aryabhata** in **mathematics** and **Kalidasa** in literature leaving a lasting impact. One of the key strengths of the Gupta Empire was its support for learning and the arts. The rulers were patrons of scholars and artists, fostering an environment where creativity could thrive.

This era produced **literary masterpieces,** such as Kalidasa's plays and the compilation of epics like the **Ramayana and Mahabharata.** Additionally, advancements in **mathematics** and **astronomy,** as seen in Aryabhata's work, showcased the empire's intellectual prowess. Despite its decline, the Gupta Empire left a lasting legacy, influencing the cultural and intellectual landscape of India. The Gupta period stands out as a time of great achievement, where a rich fabric of literature, scientific knowledge, and artistic expression was woven, shaping the course of Indian history for centuries to come.

The Vakatakas of the Deccan

12

The Vakataka dynasty, succeeded the Satavahanas in peninsular India, and emerged as a significant power in **Northern Maharashtra and Vidarbha**, exerting influence over the Deccan for more than two and a half centuries. Notably, their **historical timeline coincided with the Gupta dynasty** in northern India, showcasing the dynamic political landscape of ancient India. From the 3rd century AD to the 5th century AD, parts of South-Central India were governed by the Vakataka tradition.

DEBATE AROUND ORIGIN

The **Vakataka dynasty's origin** remains a subject of historical debate, with conflicting assertions regarding their geographical roots.

- While some sources suggest a northern origin for the Vakatakas, others contend that their beginnings can be traced to southern India. The lack of conclusive evidence adds to the mystery surrounding their heritage.
- Complicating the issue, **inscriptions in both Sanskrit and Prakrit** associated with the Vakatakas bear a resemblance to those found among the southern Pallavas, further clouding the geographical identification of their origin.
- Additionally, historical records present a notable **absence of Vakataka's presence north of the Narmada River,** adding to the ambiguity surrounding their early territorial affiliations.

The history of the Vakatakas is largely known from inscriptions and texts like the Puranas.

VAKATAKA DYNASTY

The Vakatakas, often referred to as the **Vindhyakas** in **Puranic literature,** played a crucial role in shaping the socio-religious fabric of their domain. Belonging to the Brahmin community themselves, with lineage traced to the **Vishnuvriddha gotra,** the Vakatakas were ardent supporters of Brahmanical religion. This commitment was reflected in their extensive **promotion of Vedic sacrifices**, as evidenced by numerous **copper-plate land grant charters** issued to Brahmanas. So culturally, the Vakataka kingdom is important because it became a channel to **spread Brahminical culture to southern India.**

Vindhyashakti I (250 – 270 CE)

Vindhyashakti I stands as the founding figure of the Vakataka dynasty, assumed to have ruled from **Purika**. His reign marked a crucial period in the late 3rd century, around c. 250–270 CE, initiating the dynasty's ascendancy in the Deccan region.

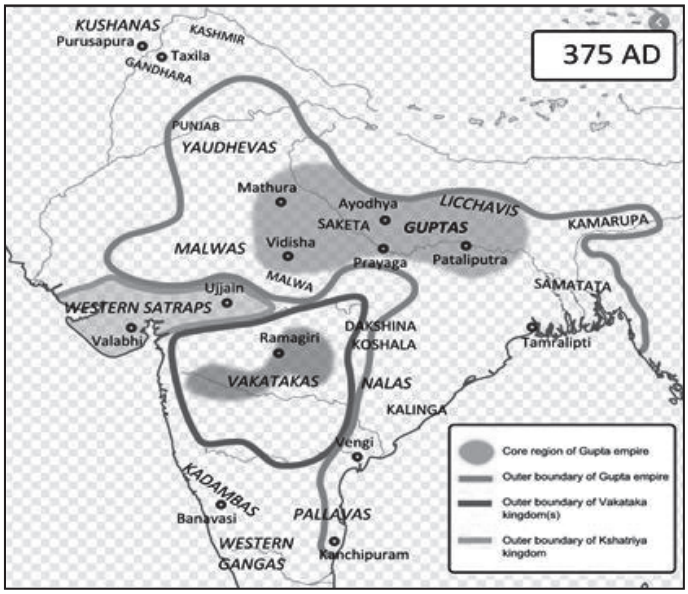


Fig. 12.1: Vakataka Empire

His major achievements and contributions are as follows:

- **Revival of Brahminical Rituals:** Vindhyashakti I played a pivotal role in reviving Brahminical rituals that had fallen into abeyance during the later rule of the Satavahanas. Credited with the performance of **numerous Vedic sacrifices,** he sought to reinstate the prominence of Brahminical practices within the socio-religious fabric of his realm.
- **Military Achievements and Recognition:**
  - The **Ajanta Inscriptions** from the time of Harisena provide insights into Vindhyashakti I's rule, describing him as a **dvija** (**twice-born**) and lauding his military prowess.
  - According to historical accounts, the sheer might of his cavalry was so formidable that the sun itself was said to be obscured by the masses of dust raised by his horses' hooves.
  - **Vindhyashakti I** was likened to the gods Puramdara (Indra) and Upendra (Vishnu), underscoring the reverence and recognition accorded to him for his military achievements.

Pravarasena (c. 270 – 330 CE)

- **Pravarasena,** the son and successor of **Vindhyashakti**, played a pivotal role in establishing the true power and greatness of the **Vakataka dynasty**.

- Under his rule, the empire witnessed significant expansion, particularly **southwards into Vidarbha** and **adjoining Deccan areas,** with the capital situated at **Kanchanaka**, identified as modern **Nachna.**

Some major developments during his reign were:

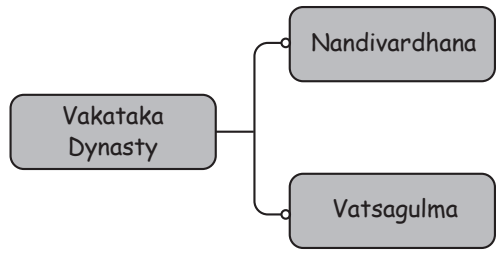
- **Military Exploits and Matrimonial Alliances:**
  - **Pravarasena** strategically employed military exploits and matrimonial alliances to extend the **Vakataka kingdom's** influence.
  - His son, **Gautamiputra**, solidified an important political alliance by marrying the **daughter of the Naga king Bhavanaga.**
  - So by military power and matrimonial alliance, the empire's boundaries stretched from **Bundelkhand in the north to Hyderabad in the south.**
  - To commemorate his victories, he performed an **Ashvamedh sacrifice** and a **vajapeya sacrifice**.
  - **Pravarasena** uniquely held the **title of Samrat,** distinguishing him from other **Vakataka rulers** who adopted the more modest **title of maharaja.**
- **Division of Empire:**
  - After **Pravarasena's demise,** his four sons independently ruled separate provinces, marking the division of the empire.
  - **Gautamiputra** likely passed away during his father's lifetime, leading to his son Rudrasena I succeeding Pravarasena and ruling from Nandivardhana, near modern Nagpur.
  - Another son, **Sarvasena,** established his rule independently from **Vastugulma (modern Bassein in Vidarbha).**

Gupta-Vakataka Relations

The Guptas and Vakatakas had internal divisions. Yet, despite the internal divisions within the Vakataka kingdom, the Gupta rulers refrained from **attacking the Vakatakas.** This diplomatic approach may be attributed to the Gupta rulers' perception that the Vakatakas could prove beneficial in potential confrontations, particularly against the **Western Kashtrapas.** This diplomatic balance underscores the nuanced political landscape of ancient India during this period.

THE DIVISION INTO TWO LINES

By 340 CE, the Vakataka dynasty was divided into two lines. One ruled from **Nandivardhana**, and the other from **Vatsagulma**. This internal division did not prompt aggression from the contemporary Gupta rulers, suggesting a strategic understanding possibly rooted in the belief that the Vakatakas could be valuable allies in potential conflicts, particularly against the Western Kashtrapas.



Nandivardhana Branch

This branch controlled Pravarapura (in the present Wardha, Maharashtra), Mansar, and Nandivardhan in the present **Nagpur locality.**

Rudrasena I (c. 340 – 365 CE)

- Rudrasena I assumed a pivotal role as the founder of the **Vakataka Nandivardhana branch,** governing from Nandivardhana near **Nagpur.**
- However, due to the absence of inscriptions from his reign, details about the events during his rule remain elusive.
- Notably, he is recognized as a devout worshipper of Lord Mahabhairava, the formidable manifestation of Shiva.

Prithvisena I (c. 365–390 CE)

- **Prithvisena I** was described as a righteous conqueror in the later Vakataka inscriptions. He was compared with the **epic hero Yudhishthira** for embodying qualities such as **truthfulness, transparency, compassion, and humility.**
- **Padmapura** served as a crucial administrative centre during his reign. A significant aspect of his rule involved a **political alliance with Chandragupta II,** resulting in the joint defeat of the **Shaka satraps of Malwa and Kathiawar.**

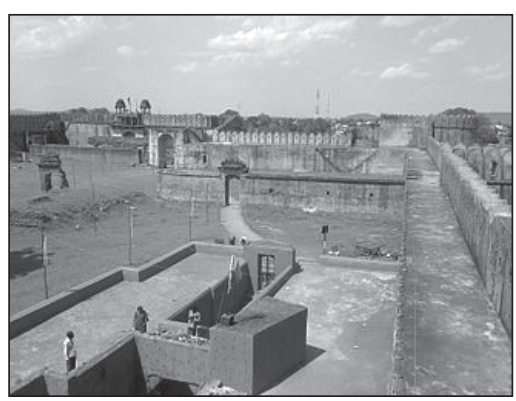


Fig. 12.2: Nandivardhana Fort

- Later in his reign, a matrimonial alliance between the Guptas and the Vakatakas was forged, with **Prithvisena's son Rudrasena II marrying Prabhavatigupta,** the daughter of Chandragupta II.

Rudrasena II (c. 390–395 CE)

- **Rudrasena II** ruled for a mere five years before his premature death, leaving three minor sons—**Divakarasena, Damodarasena, and Pravarasena**.

- **Prabhavatigupta,** his wife, assumed the regency until 410 CE. Unfortunately, **Divakarasena** also passed away prematurely, but his younger brothers, **Damodarasena and Pravarasena II,** ascended the throne.

Pravarasena II (c. 395 – 440 CE)

- Pravarasena II's reign is marked by a prolific number of Vakataka inscriptions, with a dozen **copper-plate grants** discovered across **Vidarbha.**
- Despite being a **devotee of Shiva,** he composed the Prakrit kavya "**Setubandha/Ravanavaha**," glorifying Rama's journey to Lanka and his victory over Ravana.
- Pravarasena II founded a new capital, **Pravarapura**, identified as Paunar in the present-day Wardha district.
- **Pravarasena II** engaged in a matrimonial alliance with the **Kadambas near Mysore.**
- His son, **Narendrasena**, was married to **Ajihata Bhattarika,** the daughter of **Kakutsavarman** from the **Kadamba dynasty.**
- This period witnessed cultural diversity as Pravarasena II, despite his Shaiva devotion, composed a kavya celebrating Rama.

Narendrasena (c. 440 – 460 CE)

- After **Pravarasena II's death**, a succession struggle ensued, culminating in **Narendrasena** emerging victorious.
- His reign saw both the beginning and end of invasions by **the Nala king, Bhavadottavarman.**
- In the interim, **Narendrasena** undertook conquests while facing persistent opposition from the **Nalas.**

Prithivisena II (c. 460 – 480 CE)

- **Prithivisena II,** the last known ruler of the **Nandivardhana branch,** is credited with reviving the fallen fortunes of the **Vakatakas.**
- His inscriptions highlight his efforts to rescue the empire's fortunes on **two occasions**. His reign faced challenges, including invasions by **Harisena** of the **Vatsagulma line** and **Bhavadottavarman** of the **Nala dynasty**.
- Additionally, conflicts with Traikutaka king Dahrasena of southern Gujarat are recorded.

After **Prithivisena II's death,** it is presumed that Harisena of the Vatsagulma line ultimately conquered his successors, consolidating the **Nandivardhana line** with his own.

Vatsagulma Branch

Following his father **Pravarasena I's death, Sarvasena, the second son**, established the **Vatsagulma branch.** This branch's domain lay **between the Godavari River and the Sahydri Range.** They paid respect to a few of the Ajanta Buddhist caves.

Sarvasena (c. 330 – 355 CE)

- Sarvasena, the **son of Pravarasena I,** established the **Vatsagulma line** of the **Vakatakas** with its capital at **Vatsagulma**, identified as modern **Washim in the Akola district of Maharashtra.**
- Adopting the **title dharma-maharaja, Sarvasena** was not only a ruler but also a renowned **Prakrit poet.** His lost work, the **Harivijaya,** received praise from later writers, with some of his verses incorporated into the **Gathasattasai.**

Vindhyashakti II/Vindhyasena (c. 355 – 400 CE)

- **Vindhyashakti II,** also known as **Vindhyasena,** ruled for nearly four decades and expanded his kingdom to include the **Marathwada region,** comprising the southern part of Vidarbha, the northern part of **Hyderabad state**, and adjacent territories.
- His **military achievements** included defeating the **Kadambas of Banavasi,** who ruled over Kuntala in **North Karnataka.**
- His son and successor, Pravarasena II, governed for fifteen years, followed by the pleasure-seeking ruler Devasena, whose capable minister Hasthibhoja played a significant role in governance.

Harisena (c. 475 – 500 CE)

- Harisena, the last known king of the Vatsagulma line, played a pivotal role in uniting the two Vakataka branches and significantly expanding his territories.
- His kingdom stretched from Malwa in the north to southern Maharashtra in the south, and from the Bay of Bengal in the east to the Arabian Sea in the west.
- **Dandin**, a poet of the 6th century CE, described Harisena as **powerful, truthful, bountiful, glorious, lofty**, and a discerning critic of ethical and economic compendia.
- During Harisena's reign, the **Thalner copper plates,** recording the gifts to bronze workers and goldsmiths, were issued.
- Many of the Ajanta Caves, renowned for their artistic excellence, were executed during his rule. **Inscriptions in Cave XVI** and **the Ghatotkacha cave** mention his minister, Varahadeva, highlighting the administrative stability and cultural vibrancy of the era.

Dandin

- His two most well-known works are **Dasakumaracharita** and **Kaavyadarshana**.
- The adventures of ten princes are portrayed in Dasakumaracharita "The Tale of the Ten Princes."

Decline and Succession Struggles

- With the death of Harisena, the glory of the Vakatakas ended and the Nalas, the Kadambas, the Kalachuris and Yasodharman of Malwa occupied their territory.
- The demise of Harisena marked a turning point in the political fortunes of the **Vakataka dynasty,** concluding a chapter that had witnessed remarkable cultural and territorial achievements.

AN ACCOUNT OF VAKATAKAS

Religion

- **Brahmanical religion:** Belonging to the **Brahmin community,** the Vakatakas were staunch advocates of the Brahmanical religion. Their commitment was manifested through the vigorous promotion of Vedic sacrifices, evident in the issuance of numerous **copper-plate land grant charters to Brahmanas.** This dedication underscored their role as **custodians** of **Brahminical traditions and rituals.**
- **Liberal Approach:** Despite their Brahmanical allegiance, the Vakatakas demonstrated a liberal outlook by actively patronizing Buddhism. This inclusive approach exemplified the cultural diversity that characterized their rule, showcasing a nuanced perspective on religious practices within their domain.

Strategic Marital Alliances

- **Matrimonial alliances** served as a strategic tool in Vakataka diplomacy. The dynasty formed significant marital ties with influential dynasties, including the **imperial Guptas, Nagas of Padmavati, Kadambas of Karnataka, and Vishnukundins of Andhra.**
- These alliances not only contributed to political stability but also facilitated the exchange and dissemination of cultural and religious practices.

Cultural Dissemination to Southern India

- Culturally, the **Vakataka kingdom** played a crucial role in disseminating Brahminical culture to southern India.
- Their patronage extended to various realms, including **arts, architecture, and literature**, leaving an indelible mark on the cultural landscape of the region.

Ajanta Caves and Architectural Patronage

- One of the enduring legacies of the Vakatakas lies in the **Ajanta Caves, a UNESCO World Heritage Site**.

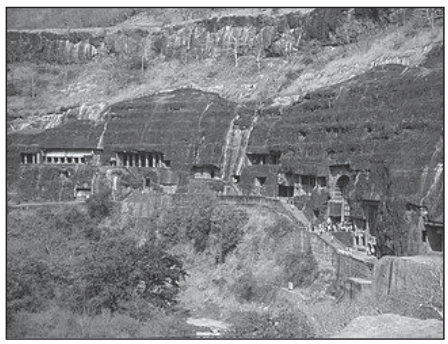


Fig. 12.3: Ajanta Caves

- Under the patronage of Vakataka King Harisena, these rock-cut **Buddhist viharas** and **chaityas** stand as masterpieces of art and architecture.
- The Vakataka rulers, including **Pravarasena II** and **Sarvasena**, not only excelled as political leaders but also distinguished themselves as esteemed poets in Prakrit.

Literary Contributions

The literary contributions of the Vakatakas, such as the **Setubandhakavya** and **Harivijaya,** exemplify the cultural richness fostered under their rule. These works showcase their intellectual pursuits and contribute significantly to the literary heritage of ancient India.

Painting and Artistic Excellence

- In the realm of painting, the Vakatakas made remarkable contributions. The Ajanta cave paintings, particularly in **caves XVI, XVII, and XIX,** highlight their excellence.
- The painting titled **Mahabhinishkramana** stands out as a testament to the **artistic vibrancy** that flourished during this period.

The Vakatakas, with their distinctive rulership and multifaceted contributions to culture, left an unparalleled imprint on the historical narrative of ancient India. Their legacy, celebrated for its artistic, literary, and cultural significance, provides a captivating glimpse into an era of flourishing creativity and intellectual pursuits.

CONCLUSION

The Vakatakas, often referred to as the Vindhyakas in Puranic literature, emerged in ancient Indian history as a dynasty that profoundly shaped the **cultural, religious, and political landscape** of their domain. Their commitment to **Brahmanical traditions**, evidenced through extensive **Vedic sacrifices** and **copper-plate land grant charters to Brahmanas,** marked them as ardent custodians of religious practices. This dedication, however, did not limit their vision, as the Vakatakas showcased a remarkable **liberal outlook** by actively patronizing Buddhism. **Matrimonial alliances** played a strategic role in **Vakataka diplomacy,** fostering political stability and facilitating cultural exchange. The dynasty's marital ties with influential dynasties, including the imperial **Guptas, Nagas, Kadambas, and Vishnukundins**, exemplify a nuanced approach to governance and diplomatic relations. The Vakatakas' commitment to cultural dissemination is evident in their pivotal role in spreading Brahminical culture to southern India.

Their patronage of **arts, architecture, and literature** left an indelible mark, with the **Ajanta Caves** standing as a testament to their architectural and artistic excellence. The legacy of the Vakatakas extends beyond political and military achievements. Under the patronage of **kings like Harisena**, they fostered a **cultural renaissance**, producing literary masterpieces such as the **Setubandhakavya and Harivijaya.** The intricate storytelling in works like **Dashakumaracharita** provides a glimpse into the societal norms and values of the time. As the Vakatakas succumbed to external pressures, their legacy lived on through the enduring **cultural and artistic contributions** that continue to captivate and inspire generations, making them a beacon of creativity and intellectual pursuits in ancient Indian history.

Age of Regional Configuration

13

For simplicity, we broadly categorize the period from around 600 to 1200 CE into **two phases,** each distinct for North and South India. During this period in India, **feudalism, political fragmentation**, and the **emergence of various regional states** characterized the landscape.

In the southern part of the country, particularly, this era is seen as one of segmentary statehood. Here, kings played more of a ritualistic role, lacking a solid revenue structure or a standing army.

In North India, from around 600 to 750 CE, the dominance of the **Pushyabhutis of Thaneswar** and the **Maukharis of Kannauj** was notable. Correspondingly, in South India during the same period, three major states emerged: the Pallavas of Kanchi, the Chalukyas of Badami, and the Pandyas of Madurai.

The period from 750 to 1200 CE in North India can be further divided into two phases:

- **Phase I**, spanning from 750 to 1000 CE, marked the era of three significant empires: **the Gurjara Pratiharas** in the north, the **Palas** in the east, and the **Rashtrakutas** in the Deccan.
- **Phase II,** from 1000 to 1200 CE, is known as the age of conflict and the breakdown of the tripartite powers into numerous smaller kingdoms across the country. In northern India, the disintegration of the **Pratihara** empire led to the rise of various Rajput states, including the **Chahamanas** (Chauhans), **Chandellas, Paramaras of Malwa**, and others. Despite their resistance against Turkish attacks from northwest India led by **Mahmud Ghazni and Mohammad Ghori** in the 11th and 12th centuries, these states ultimately succumbed due to their inability to unite against the invaders.
- In South India, from around 850 to 1200 CE, the Cholas held supremacy. Despite the political divisions in India during this period, it contributed significantly to the enrichment of culture, with noteworthy developments in art, literature, and language. Some of the finest examples of temple architecture and Indian literature belong to this era.

Kannauj's Rise to Prominence

- **Kanauj's Ascendancy as Political Center:** Harsha strategically established Kanauj as the epicenter of his power, extending his authority in all directions. This marked a significant shift, as Pataliputra, once a powerhouse, faced a decline during this period.
- **Economic Factors of Pataliputra's Decline:** Pataliputra's historic significance was rooted in **trade, commerce, and the widespread use of currency.** Tolls collected from traders arriving via four rivers contributed to its prosperity. However, a scarcity of money led to a decline in trade, impacting the city's importance.
- **Increase in Importance of Strategic Locations:** With the decline of Pataliputra, power shifted to military camps and strategically important locations.
  - The feudal age in North India saw prominence in areas that could be easily **fortified** and dominated long stretches of land.
  - Kanauj's elevation and strategic positioning made it easily fortifiable, a stark contrast to the challenges faced by plains-based fortifications.
  - Its central location facilitated control over both eastern and western wings, allowing the movement of soldiers by land and water routes.
- **Mark of Feudal Age:** Kanauj, situated in **Farrukhabad**, Uttar Pradesh, emerged as a political powerhouse in the second half of the sixth century.
  - Its rise symbolized the advent of the feudal age in North India, contrasting with the pre-feudal order represented by Pataliputra.

Early Medieval Era a Dark Phase?

The era spanning from AD 750 to AD 1200 is commonly known as the **early medieval period** in Indian history. Historically, this period was often labelled as a **'dark phase'** due to the prevalence of **political fragmentation,** with numerous regional states engaging in **constant conflicts**.

However, contemporary research suggests a more nuanced perspective. Despite political divisions and conflicts, India experienced a flourishing of **vibrant cultural activities** in realms such as art, literature, and language during this time.

Contrary to the earlier characterization as 'dark,' recent findings reveal that the period yielded some of the finest examples of **temple architecture** and significant contributions to Indian literature. Instead of viewing it negatively, this era can be regarded as a **bright and dynamic phase** in the tapestry of Indian history.

PERIOD FROM 600 CE -750 CE: NORTHERN INDIA

Pushyabhutis of Thanesar

The Gupta Empire had ensured stability in northern India, particularly in present-day **Uttar Pradesh and Bihar,** for approximately 160 years until the mid-6th century CE. However, the decline of the Gupta Empire led to the fragmentation of northern India into multiple kingdoms. From the 5th century CE onwards, regions such as Kashmir, Punjab, and northwest India fell under the control of the white **Hunas**. Subsequently, from the middle of the 6th century CE, different feudatories of the Guptas governed northern and western India.

Following the Gupta Empire's decline, the Pushyabhuti dynasty emerged as a significant ruling family, establishing its capital at **Thanesar, near Kurukshetra in Haryana.** The dynasty gained prominence with the accession of Prabhakar Vardhana, who successfully defeated the Hunas and consolidated his influence in the Punjab and Haryana regions. "**The Harshacharita,"** a biography of Harsha authored by Harsha's court poet **Banabhatta**, and the travelogues of the Chinese pilgrim **Hsuan Tsang/Xuanzang** serve as crucial historical sources providing insights into the Pushyabhuti dynasty. The reign of Prabhakar Vardhana marked a pivotal moment in the dynasty's history, establishing a foundation for their dominance in the northern and western regions of India.

Prabhakar Vardhana (Around mid-6th Century CE):

The Pushyabhuti dynasty, originally **feudatories of the Guptas**, reached prominence under the leadership of Prabhakar Vardhana in the mid-6th century CE. Prabhakar Vardhana, the fourth king of the dynasty, played a pivotal role in establishing its foundations.

- Renowned as a skilled military general, he achieved numerous victories on the battlefield.
- One of Prabhakar Vardhana's strategic moves involved forming crucial marital alliances.
- He married his daughter, **Rajyashri to Grahavarman**, the ruler of the **Maukharis of Kanyakubja (Kannauj)**. This alliance strengthened the ties between the Pushyabhutis and the Maukharis, creating a significant power bloc in the region.
- Upon Prabhakar Vardhana's demise, his elder son, **Rajya Vardhana**, ascended to the throne. However, his reign was cut short by a tragic turn of events.
  - Rajya Vardhana fell victim to treachery when Shashanka, the king of **Gauda (Bengal and Bihar),** orchestrated his untimely demise.
- This unfortunate incident marked a challenging period for the Pushyabhuti dynasty, as political intrigue and external threats posed significant challenges to their rule.

Succession and Early Challenges

- Rajya Vardhana initially succeeded Prabhakar Vardhana, but it was Harsha who eventually ascended to power.
- Rajya Vardhana, facing the need to undertake a campaign against **Devagupta, the ruler of Malwa**, and **Shashanka, the ruler of Gauda,** entrusted the governance to Harsha.
- This decision was prompted by the imprisonment of their sister, Rajyashri, and the killing of her husband, Grahavarman, by Shashanka.

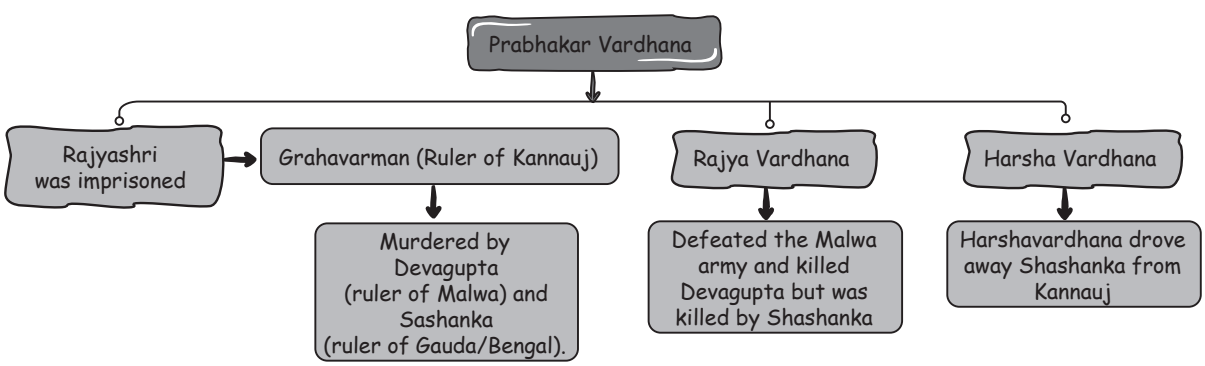

Prabhakar Vardhana
Rajyashri was imprisoned
Grahavarman (Ruler of Kannauj)
Rajya Vardhana
Harsha Vardhana
Murdered by Devagupta (ruler of Malwa) and Sashanka (ruler of Gauda/Bengal).
Defeated the Malwa army and killed Devagupta but was killed by Shashanka
Harshavardhana drove away Shashanka from Kannauj

Fig. 13.1: Flowchart of the Pushyabhutis

Harsha Vardhana (c. 606–647 CE)

- Harsha Vardhana, reigning from approximately 606 to 647 CE, is celebrated as the final great Hindu king of India.
- This influential monarch, originally a follower of Shaivism, demonstrated a notable affinity for Buddhism. Harsha's reign was characterized by his extensive support for Buddhism, marked by generous endowments to Buddhist communities.
- Popularly known as Harsha, he earned the epithet 'Lord of the North' (**Sakalauttarapathanatha**) for his dominance in the northern regions of India.

Rise to Power at a Young Age:

- In the wake of these tumultuous events, Harsha ascended to the throne at the tender age of sixteen.
- Despite his youth, he quickly demonstrated his prowess as a formidable warrior and an adept administrator.

- Harsha's first significant action was marching towards Kannauj, rescuing his sister **Rajyashri** from a perilous situation, preventing her from committing **Sati**—an act of self-immolation.

Consolidation of Power:

- Harsha's swift actions led to the consolidation of power, with Kannauj coming under the sovereignty of the Pushyabhuti dynasty.
- Subsequently, he confronted and defeated Shashanka, extending his control over parts of **Kongoda in Orissa.**
- This marked the beginning of Harsha's efforts to expand and stabilize his kingdom, showcasing his military acumen and political astuteness.

Harsha's Military Campaigns:

- During his initial expedition, Harsha expelled **Shashanka from Kanauj** and designated it as his new capital, thereby becoming the predominant ruler of northern India. Harsha engaged in battles against **Dhuruvasena II of Valabhi,** emerging victorious and reducing Dhuruvasena II to a vassal.
- **Defeated by Pulakesin II:** One of Harsha's pivotal military endevours was directed against Pulakesin II, the Western Chalukya ruler. Both Hiuen Tsang's accounts and inscriptions from Pulakesin II elucidate the specifics of this campaign.
  - Despite Harsha's ambition to expand his realm south of the **Narmada River**, the **Aihole inscription** of Pulakesin II narrates Harsha's defeat, leading Pulakesin to assume the title Paramesvara, a triumph confirmed by Hiuen Tsang.
- **Nepal and Assam:**
  - **Nepal** acknowledged Harsha's overlordship, and he secured control over Kashmir, receiving tributes from its ruler.
  - Maintaining friendly relations, Harsha interacted diplomatically with **Bhaskaravarman**, the ruler of **Assam**.
- **Emperor of the North:** Harsha's final military conquest targeted the kingdom of **Kalinga** in **Orissa**, culminating in success.
  - **Extent of the Empire:** Harsha's empire encompassed key regions such as Thaneswar, Kannauj, Ahichchhatra, Shravasti, and Prayag and extended into Magadha and Orissa.
    - While the capital was initially at Thaneswar, Harsha later moved it to Kannauj, and the southern boundary of his empire was defined by the Narmada River.
    - Consequently, Harsha established his dominance over all of northern India, directly governing regions such as **Rajasthan, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Orissa.**
  - His influence extended even further, with peripheral states like **Kashmir, Sind, Valabhi, and Kamarupa** acknowledging his sovereignty.

Diplomacy and Subordinate Rulers:

- Subordinate rulers, holding titles like **samanta and raja**, marked the Harsha era from 606 CE, the year of Harsha Vardhana's accession.
- Harsha's diplomatic prowess is evident through his friendship with the Chinese pilgrim Hsuan Tsang, who visited India during 629–644 CE.
- Hsuan Tsang provided a detailed account of a grand assembly at Kannauj in 643 CE, attended by representatives of **Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism**, as well as subordinate kings from **Vallabhi and Assam.**

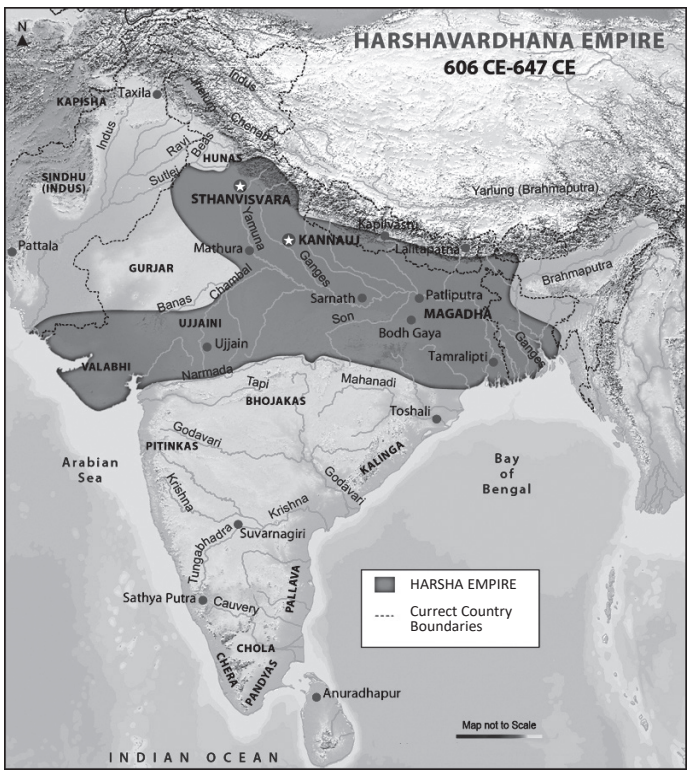


Fig. 13.2: Harshavardhana Empire

Cultural Patronage and Festivals:

- Harsha was a great patron of the arts and learning. He personally contributed to literature, having authored three dramas—**Priyadarshika, Ratnavali (both romantic comedies), and Nagananda (based on Bodhisattva Jimutavahana).**
- He also wrote on grammar and two Sutra works. Additionally, he composed the inscriptions **at Madhuban and Banskhera**, showcasing his calligraphic skills.
- **Banabhatta, Mayura, Bhartrihari, and Matanga Divakara** were prominent writers at his court.
- Harsha established a significant monastery at **Nalanda**.

Diplomatic Relations and Legacy:

- Harsha maintained diplomatic relations with China, as evidenced by three embassies sent by the contemporary **T'ang Emperor.**
- The last embassy, led by **Wang-hiuen-tse**, arrived in India in 647 CE, after Harsha's passing.

Following Harsha's death, a period of political confusion persisted until the 8th century, when the Gurjara Pratiharas and Rajput rulers emerged as influential forces in northern India. Harsha's reign left an indelible mark on the cultural and political landscape of ancient India.

Administration under Harsha:

- Harsha's governance of his empire closely resembled the administrative framework of the **Guptas**, albeit with certain distinctive features, including a more **feudal and decentralized** structure.
- The leading feudatories under Harsha played crucial roles in the administration, with notable figures such as **Bhaskaravarmana of Kamarupa, Dhruvabhatta of Vallabhi**, **Purnavarman of Magadha,** and **Udita of Jalandhara.**

Military Organization:

- Harsha maintained a substantial military force, consisting of infantry, cavalry, chariots, and elephants.
- Military power was concentrated in **skandhavaras** or military camps.
- Feudatories provided contributory forces when required.
- Land grants continued as a means of compensating priests for their services, and it is believed that charters granting land to officers in lieu of salary likely began during Harsha's rule, evident in the reduced issuance of coins.

Revenue Distribution:

- Hsuan Tsang's records indicate that taxation was light, with revenues divided into four parts:
  - Allocated for the king's use
  - Reserved for scholars
  - Designated for the endowments of officials and public servants
  - Allocated for religious purposes
- In the post-Harsha period , "Hundi' generally referred A bill of exchange

Personal Involvement in Administration:

- Harsha personally oversaw the administration and devoted a significant portion of his day to religious activities.
- Hsuan Tsang mentions that Harsha divided his day into three parts, with the first dedicated to administrative duties.
- Frequent tours of inspection around the kingdom allowed Harsha to maintain a close watch on the functioning of his empire.

Law and Order:

- While Harsha's administration implemented severe laws, particularly in cases of robbery, later influences from Buddhism led to a mitigation of punishments.
- Criminals were often sentenced to lifelong punishments rather than more severe measures.
- Hsuan Tsang's travel statements, mentioning incidents of robbery, highlight certain challenges in maintaining law and order during Harsha's reign.

Society and Economy under Harsha:

- **Social Hierarchy during Harsha's Era:** Bana and Hiuen Tsang's accounts reveal the persistence of the traditional fourfold social hierarchy – Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra. Brahmins enjoyed privileged status and received land grants, while Kshatriyas constituted the ruling class.
  - Vaishyas were primarily engaged in trade, and Shudras were involved in agriculture, encompassing various sub-castes.
- **Challenges to Women's Status:** Despite the social hierarchy, women's status faced challenges during Harsha's reign. Practices like Swyamvara diminished, and widow remarriage, especially among higher castes, was prohibited.
  - The prevalence of the dowry system and the persistence of the practice of sati further underscored the unsatisfactory state of women.
- **Funerary Practices:** Hiuen Tsang documented three methods of disposing of the dead: **cremation, water burial, and exposure in the woods.** His observations provide insights into cultural and societal norms during Harsha's era.
- **Economic Decline and its Impact:** Harsha's reign witnessed an economic downturn marked by a decline in trade and commerce. This is evident in the contraction of trade centers, reduced coin circulation, and decreased activity within merchant guilds.
  - The cascading effect on the handicrafts industry and agriculture led to a shift towards a self-sufficient village economy, contributing to an overall economic decline compared to the prosperous Gupta period.

Cultural and Religious Landscape:

- **Artistic and Architectural Contributions:** Harsha's period exhibited limited artistic and architectural innovations, largely adhering to the Gupta style. Hiuen Tsang provides insights into notable structures such as the grand monastery in **Nalanda** with multiple stories and the opulent brick temple of Lakshmana at Sirpur.
- **Patronage of Learning and Intellectual Environment:** Harsha emerged as a significant patron of learning, fostering a vibrant intellectual environment in his court. Literary luminaries such as **Banabhatta, Matanga Divakara, and Barthrihari** were prominent figures.

- Harsha himself demonstrated literary prowess by authoring three plays: **Ratnavali, Priyadarsika, and Nagananda.**

❑ **Support for Nalanda University:** Harsha played a crucial role in supporting Nalanda University through generous endowments, elevating it to international acclaim. Hiuen Tsang, who visited Nalanda, enrolled as a student there, highlighting the university's significance as a distinguished center of learning during Harsha's reign.

Nalanda University

❑ Ancient Chinese travelers who explored India made mention of several educational institutions, with the most renowned being the Hinayana University of Valabhi and the Mahayana University of Nalanda.

❑ Hiuen Tsang, in particular, provided a valuable account of Nalanda University, whose name translates to "giver of knowledge."

❑ Established during the Gupta period by Kumaragupta I, it received patronage not only from his successors but also from the later ruler Harsha.

❑ The educators at Nalanda, referred to as panditas, included illustrious figures like Dingnaga, Dharmapala, Sthiramati, and Silabadhra. Dharmapala, originally from Kanchipuram, eventually rose to head the prestigious institution.

❑ Nalanda was a residential university, offering free education inclusive of boarding and lodging. Its maintenance relied on revenue from 100 to 200 villages endowed by various rulers.

❑ While primarily a Mahayana University, Nalanda covered diverse religious subjects such as the Vedas, Hinayana doctrine, Sankhya, and Yoga philosophies.
- The curriculum also encompassed general subjects like logic, grammar, astronomy, medicine, and art.

❑ The university attracted students not only from various regions of India but also from Eastern countries.

❑ Admission was through a challenging entrance examination, with a success rate of no more than thirty percent. The institution upheld strict discipline, emphasizing discussions over lectures, and employed Sanskrit as the medium of instruction.

❑ Recent archaeological excavations have revealed the ruins of Nalanda University, validating the accounts given by Chinese pilgrims. The site showcased the grandeur of this center of learning, featuring numerous classrooms and an attached hostel.

❑ According to the Chinese pilgrim Itsing, over 2000 students were enrolled.

❑ Nalanda boasted an observatory and an extensive library housed in three buildings. Its global renown stemmed from its ability to attract scholars from various corners of the world, establishing itself as a center for advanced learning and research.

Hiuen Tsang's Account:

❑ **Hiuen Tsang's Journey and Purpose:** Hiuen Tsang, the **Chinese pilgrim,** embarked on a journey from China in **629 AD**, reaching India and returning in **645 AD**.
- His primary purpose was to study at the Buddhist University of **Nalanda** in Bihar, collecting various texts during his extended stay and engaging in academic pursuits.

❑ **Insights into Harsha's Court and Society:** Hiuen Tsang's time in Harsha's court and extensive travels across the Indian subcontinent provide a detailed account of Harsha's court, societal dynamics, and religious sects. His observations surpass the information provided by Fahien, offering unique insights into the period.
- The roads and river routes were not completely immune from robbery. As regards punishment for offenses, ordeals by fire, water and poison were the instruments for determining the innocence or guilt of a person.

❑ **Societal Dynamics and Economic Insights:** According to Hiuen Tsang, **Pataliputra and Vaishali** were declining, while **Prayag and kannauj** in the Doab region had gained prominence.
- His characterization of **Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Shudras**, along with observations on the lifestyles of nobles and priests, provides insights into societal dynamics.
- The account also highlights economic aspects, shedding light on the lives of agriculturalists and untouchables, revealing changes from earlier portrayals.
- The tradesmen had to pay duties at ferries and barrier stations.

❑ **Religious Sects and Untouchables:** Hiuen Tsang's observations encompass various religious sects and the existence of untouchables, including scavengers and executioners. He notes their lifestyles, dietary habits, and how they announced their presence in towns. These details contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the religious and social landscape of Harsha's era.

THE MAITRAKAS

The Maitrakas, initially tributary chiefs of the Guptas, later established an autonomous kingdom in western India, reigning over **Saurashtra in Gujarat**. **Dhruvasena II** emerged as a prominent ruler among the Maitrakas and played a key role in the dynasty's history. Notably, he was a contemporary of **Harsha Vardhana** and married the daughter of the influential Gupta ruler. Vallabhi became not only a political capital but also a hub of cultural and educational activities. The city's prominence as a center of learning added to its significance in the region.

Reign of Dhruvasena II

- Dhruvasena II, a significant figure in the Maitraka dynasty, attended Harsha's assembly at **Prayaga (Allahabad**), highlighting the interconnectedness of regional powers during this period.
- The Maitrakas chose Vallabhi as their capital, and it evolved into a noteworthy center of learning.
  - Situated along the Arabian Sea, Vallabhi also functioned as a thriving port town, fostering trade and commerce.

Decline under Arab Attacks

- The Maitrakas' rule endured until the middle of the 8th century, facing a decline in power due to Arab attacks.
- The weakening of the Maitraka dynasty can be attributed to external pressures, notably the incursions by Arab forces.
  - These attacks had a significant impact on the political landscape of western India during this period.

The Maitrakas' journey from tributary chiefs to establishing an independent kingdom and their subsequent decline is emblematic of the complex political dynamics that characterized the historical landscape of India during this era.

THE MAUKHARIES

The Maukharies, initially serving as subordinate rulers under the Guptas and bearing the title of "**samanta**," exercised their authority from the city of **Kannauj** in western Uttar Pradesh. Over time, Kannauj gradually supplanted **Pataliputra** as the preeminent political center in northern India. Notably, the sister of Harsha Vardhana, **Rajyashri**, entered matrimony with **Grahavarmana**, a key figure among the Maukharies.

- **Joint Attack of Bengal and Malwa:** The unfortunate fate of Grahavarmana unfolded when he became the target of a joint attack by **Shashanka**, the ruler of Bengal (Gauda), and **Devagupta**, the ruler of Malwa. This collaborative assault led to Grahavarmana's demise.
- **Integration with Pushyabhutis:** Subsequently, following Harsha Vardhana's successful expedition, the kingdom of Kannauj underwent a significant transformation. It became integrated with the realm of the Pushyabhutis, prompting Harsha to relocate his capital from **Thanesar (Kurukshetra)** to **Kannauj**.
  - This strategic move solidified Kannauj's status as a central political hub under the aegis of Harsha Vardhana.

Furthermore, the historical accounts of the Maukharies find mention in **Patanjali's work,** adding to the multifaceted narrative of their role and significance in the political landscape of ancient India.

Hari Varhmana Maukhari (mid-6th century CE)

- Hari Varhmana Maukhari, a pivotal figure in the mid-6th century CE, assumed the title of **'Maharaja**.' However, historical records do not provide details regarding the extent of his kingdom, leaving aspects of his rule shrouded in mystery.

Advaita Varmana

- Advaita Varmana, succeeding his father Hari Varhmana, is reported to have adopted the title of **'Maharaja**.' The specifics of his reign and the territories under his control remain uncharted.

Ishanavarmana (c. 554 CE)

- Ishanavarmana emerges as a central figure in the Maukhari lineage, recognized as the **authentic founder** of Maukhari supremacy.
- According to the **Asirgarh copper plate inscription,** he held the prestigious title of **'Maharajadhiraja**.'
- Under Ishanavarmana's reign, the Maukhari kingdom expanded significantly, encompassing regions as far-reaching as **Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, and Gauda.**
- Notably, he encountered opposition from the later Guptas, initiating a protracted struggle.
- His military endevours included a notable victory against the **Hunas**, adding to his historical legacy.
- It is believed that the Maukharis might have collaborated with the Hunas, potentially serving as feudatories under **Baladitya** of the Imperial Gupta family.
- The Harsha inscription further credits Ishanavarmana with triumphs over the **Sulikas**.

The material artifacts of Ishanavarmana, such as seals and coins, portray him as a man of learning, a just ruler, a courageous warrior, and a supporter of education. These attributes contribute to a multifaceted understanding of Ishanavarmana's leadership and influence during this period in Indian history.

Sarvavarmana (c. 560–585 CE)

- Believed to be the son of Ishanavarmana, Sarvavarmana assumed the throne following his father's demise.
- He effectively retained control over Magadha and kept the later Guptas in a subordinate position.
- The **Asirgadh Inscription**, situated in the **Nimar** district of **Madhya Pradesh**, highlights Sarvavarmana's triumph over **Damodargupta** and designates Nimar as a **'Maukhari outpost in the Deccan.'**
- During Sarvavarmana's rule, the later Guptas posed no significant challenges.

Avanti Varmana (c. 585–600 CE)

- Successor to Sarvavarmana, Avantivarmana ascended to the throne, assuming the title of **'Maharajadhiraja**.'
- The **Nalanda seal** attests to his reign, showcasing his role in expanding the kingdom's boundaries.
- Avantivarmana's pivotal decision to transfer the capital to the historical city of Kannauj marked a critical phase in Maukhari history.

- It was during his rule that the Maukhari empire reached its zenith.

Grahavarmana (around c. 600 CE)

- ❑ Grahavarmana, the successor to Avantivarmana, married Rajyashri, the daughter of **Prabhakar Vardhana** from the Pushyabhuti family of **Thanesara**.
- ❑ Unfortunately, Grahavarmana met his demise at the hands of **Deva Gupta** from the later Gupta lineage. This marked a turning point for the Maukhari dynasty.

Decline and Disappearance

- ❑ Following Grahavarmana's reign, the Maukhari family gradually faded into obscurity.
- ❑ The intricate dynamics of political alliances, conflicts, and external pressures likely contributed to the decline of this once-prominent dynasty, concluding an important chapter in the history of northern India.

PERIOD FROM C. 600-750 CE: SOUTHERN INDIA

The time frame spanning approximately 300 to 750 CE represents the second historical phase in the region south of the Vindhyas. While certain trends and developments persisted from the initial historical phase (circa 200 BCE to 300 CE), this later period also exhibited significant divergences and unique characteristics.

First Historical Phase (c. 200 BCE – 300 CE)	Second Historical Phase (c. 300–750 CE)
❑ The prominent kingdoms during this era included the Satavahanas, the Cholas, the Cheras, and the Pandyas.	❑ During this period, the three principal kingdoms were those of the Pallavas in Kanchi, the Chalukyas in Badami, and the Pandyas in Madurai.
❑ Notably, this period was characterized by a flourishing of various crafts, an extensive network of internal and external trade, the widespread use of coins, and the establishment of numerous towns.	❑ While trade, towns, and coinage experienced a decline in this phase, there was a notable expansion in the agrarian economy.
❑ A distinctive feature of this historical phase was the significant patronage extended to Buddhism. ❑ This support is evident through the construction of extensive Buddhist monuments in both Andhra and Maharashtra. ❑ Cave inscriptions further indicate the coexistence of Jainism and Buddhism in the southern districts of Tamil Nadu.	❑ This era witnessed a shift towards a greater emphasis on Brahmanism, with kings actively participating in Vedic sacrifices. ❑ Jainism, on the other hand, saw limited prominence, primarily confined to the region of Karnataka. ❑ The cultural landscape evolved as the tradition of Megaliths gradually gave way to the construction of temples.
❑ The predominant language used in the epigraphs of this period was Prakrit, contributing to the documentation of historical events and cultural developments.	❑ Sanskrit emerged as the official language of the peninsula during this period, with most charters being prepared in this language. ❑ This linguistic shift reflected a broader cultural transformation in the southern regions of India during this historical phase.

Western Chalukyas of Badami

In the regions of **northern Maharashtra** and **Vidarbha (Berar)**, the **Satavahanas** were succeeded by the **Vakatakas**. Following the Vakatakas, the Chalukyas of Badami rose to prominence, significantly influencing the history of Deccan and south India for approximately two centuries, starting from the early 6th century CE. The Chalukyas, recognized as a **maritime power**, established their kingdom in the western Deccan, with their capital situated at **Vatapi** (modern Badami in Karnataka). Alongside the Western Chalukyas, two other branches of the Chalukya lineage ruled independently—the **Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi** and **the Chalukyas of Lata.**

The Western Chalukyas sought legitimacy and respectability by claiming a **Brahmanical** origin as **Haritiputras** of the **Manavya gotra**. Pulakeshin I, the founder king of this dynasty, played a pivotal role in establishing the independent power and authority of the Western Chalukyas.

Pulkeshin I (c. 535–566 CE):

- ❑ Founded the kingdom with the capital at **Vatapi (Badami, Karnataka).**
- ❑ Conducted numerous **shrauta sacrifices**, including **ashvamedha**.

Kirtivarman I (c. 566–598 CE):

- ❑ Son of Pulkeshin I, expanded the kingdom and defeated the **Kadambas of Banavasi**, Mauryas of the Konkan, and the Nalas of the Bastar area.

Mangalesha (c. 598–609 CE):

- ❑ War of succession started after Kirtivarman I's death, **Mangalesha** contested with nephew Pulakeshin II, with Pulakeshin II emerging victorious.

Pulakeshin II (c. 610–642 CE):

- ❑ Most powerful king, known for military successes against **Kadambas, Alupas, Gangas,** and expeditions in the **eastern Deccan, south Kosala, and Kalinga.**

- **He defeated Harsha Vardhana** on the banks of the Narmada, earning the title **dakshinapatheshvara** (lord of the south).
- **Pulakeshin II** sent an embassy to Persian king Khusro II, depicted in the Ajanta Caves.
- He was tolerant towards Buddhism and Jainism despite being a Hindu ruler, as noted by Hsuan Tsang.
- **Conflicts with the Pallavas:** Pulakeshin II was involved in conflicts with the Pallavas of Kanchi and successfully annexed the region between Krishna and **Godavari (Vengi)** from the Pallavas.
  - The first expedition against the Pallavas, ruled by **Mahendravarman I**, was a success, but the second ended in failure with Pulkeshin II's death at the hands of King **Narsimhavarman**, who adopted the epithet of **Vatapikonda**.
  - Following Pulkeshin II's death, the Badami Chalukya dynasty faced internal feuds, leading to a brief decline.
  - Badami was occupied by the Pallavas for 13 years, initiating a prolonged political struggle between the Pallavas and Chalukyas that persisted for over a hundred years.

Vikramaditya I (c. 655–680 CE):

- Vikramaditya I, during his reign, achieved significant military successes and strategic advancements for the Chalukya dynasty.
- He successfully ousted the Pallavas from Badami, reclaiming authority over the entire kingdom.
- He conquered the Pallava capital, Kanchi, symbolizing his dominance over the Pallava rulers.
- He adopted the title **'Rajamalla**,' signifying his sovereignty over the **Mallas or Pallavas.**
- Vikramaditya I achieved victories against other prominent southern kingdoms, defeating the **Cheras, Cholas, and Pandyas.**

Vinayaditya I (c. 680–696 CE):

- Vinayaditya I, succeeding Vikramaditya I, played a crucial role in the continued prosperity of the Chalukya rule. He contributed to the dynasty's prosperity during his rule.
- He is notable for his extensive temple-building initiatives, which left a lasting impact on the architectural landscape.

Vijayaditya (c. 696–733 CE):

- Vijayaditya's reign was characterized by prosperity and notable architectural endevours.
- He ruled for 37 years, overseeing a period of sustained economic and cultural growth.
- He gained prominence for prolific temple construction, adding to the architectural legacy of the Chalukya dynasty.

Vikramaditya II (c. 733–743 CE):

- Under the rule of Vikramaditya II, the Chalukya dynasty experienced a resurgence, marked by military victories and cultural patronage.
- Noteworthy for his repeated invasions into **Tondaimandalam**, successfully avenging earlier defeats by the Pallavas.
- Demonstrated benevolence towards **Kanchipuram**, the Pallava capital, leaving a positive impact on the monuments of the region.
- Faced and repelled **Arab invasions** in southern Gujarat, securing the Chalukya-held territories against external threats.
- He later also overran the other traditional kingdoms of Tamil country, the Pandyas, the Cholas, and the Cheras, in addition to subduing a **Kalabhra ruler**.

Kirtivarman II (c. 743–757 CE):

- Kirtivarman II, the last ruler of the Chalukya dynasty, faced defeat at the hands of the emerging Rashtrakuta power, marking the end of Chalukyan rule.
- He experienced defeat at the hands of Rashtrakuta King, **Dantidurga**, signaling the decline of Chalukyan authority.
- The defeat paved the way for the rise of the Rashtrakutas as a dominant force in the region, marking the end of the Chalukya dynasty around 757 CE.

Cultural Flourishing in the Chalukyan Period: Art and Architecture

The Chalukyan period stands out culturally for its remarkable contributions to art and architecture in the Deccan region. The distinctive architectural style developed during this era is recognized as 'Chalukyan architecture,' leaving an enduring impact that reached its zenith under subsequent dynasties such as the Rashtrakutas and Hoyasalas in the 13th century.

Chalukyan Architecture:

- The Chalukyas, known for their significant contributions to the arts, played a pivotal role in the development of the **vesara style,** a distinctive architectural approach for structural temples.
- While the vesara style found its zenith under the Rashtrakutas and the Hoysalas, the Chalukyas notably erected structural temples in **Aihole, Badami, and Pattadakal.**
  - Additionally, they gained recognition for their cave temples in **Ajanta, Ellora, and Nasik.**
- Chalukya cave temples, particularly those in Ajanta and Badami, showcase exemplary paintings.
  - A painting in Ajanta depicts the reception of a Persian embassy by Pulakesin II.
- The evolution of Chalukya temple architecture can be categorized into two stages:

- The first stage includes temples in Aihole and Badami. Among the seventy temples in Aihole, notable ones are the **Ladh Khan temple**, characterized by a low, flat-roofed structure with a pillared hall; the **Durga temple**, reminiscent of a **Buddha Chaitya**; the **Huchimalligudi temple**; and the **Jain temple at Meguti**.
  - In Badami, the **Muktheeswara temple** and the **Melagutti Sivalaya** stand out for their architectural beauty, featuring high workmanship and adorned walls with beautiful images of deities and humans.
- The second stage is represented by the temples at **Pattadakal**, featuring ten temples—four in the **northern style** and six in the **Dravidian style.**
  - The **Papanatha temple** is a notable example of the northern style, while the **Sangamesvara temple** and the **Virupaksha temple** are renowned for their Dravidian style.
  - The **Virupaksha temple**, modeled after the **Kailasanatha temple in Kanchipuram**, was commissioned by one of **Vikramaditya II's queens.**
  - Sculptors from Kanchi were engaged in its construction, contributing to its architectural grandeur.

Geographical Concentration:

- The primary centers of Chalukyan temple-building activity were **Aihole, Badami, Pattadakal, and Mahakuta** in modern **Karnataka**.

Phases of Temple Building:

1. **Early Phase (Last Quarter of the 6th Century):**
   - Prominent cave temples were constructed, including three elementary caves at **Aihole (Vedic, Jaina, and an incomplete Buddhist cave).**
   - Four **developed cave temples** at **Badami**, featuring plain exteriors and finely finished interiors, contain sculpted images of deities such as **Harihara, Mahishasuramardhini, Varaha, Narasimha, Trivikrama, Vishnu seated on Anantha (the snake), and Nataraja**.

Fig. 13.3: Badami Cave Temple

2. **Second Phase:**
   - Aihole witnessed the construction of around 70 structures, earning it the reputation of being one of the cradles of Indian temple architecture.
   - Notable structures include the **Lad Khan Temple** with unique perforated stone windows, the **Meguti Jain Temple** showcasing progress in structural design, and the Durga Temple with a northern Indian style tower.
   - Other Dravida style temples from this period include the **Naganatha Temple at Nagaral, Banantigudi Temple, and the Mahakutesvara Temple.**

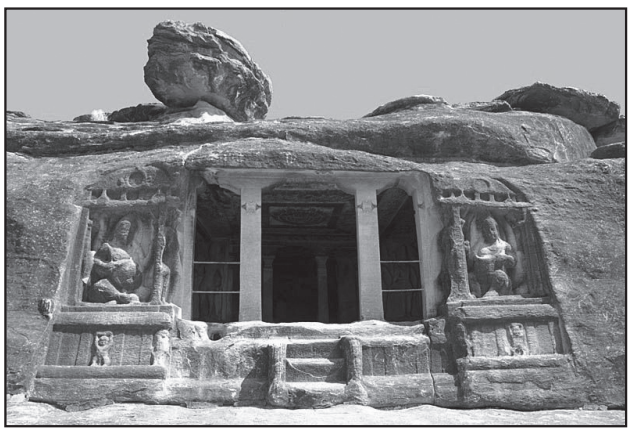


Fig. 13.4: Caves at Aihole

3. **Mature Phase:**
   - The mature phase includes the structural temples at Pattadakal, a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** built in the **8th** century.
   - Pattadakal hosts ten temples, six in the **southern Dravida style** and four in the **northern Nagara style.**
   - Notable temples include the **Sangameshwara Temple**, the renowned **Virupaksha Temple** containing representations from the **Mahabharata**, and the **Mallikarjuna Temple.**
     - Inscriptions suggest that the Virupaksha and Mallikarjuna Temples were commissioned by the queens of King Vikramaditya II after his military success against the Pallavas of Kanchipuram.
   - The **Bhutanatha group of temples** at **Badami** also belongs to this mature phase.

Fig. 13.5: Temples in Pattadakal

Artistic Contributions:

- Much of the paintings and sculptures in the Ajanta and Ellora caves, reflecting exquisite craftsmanship, were completed during the Chalukyan reign, underscoring their patronage of the arts.

Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi

In the late 8th century, the Eastern Chalukyas solidified control over **Vengi in Andhra Pradesh**, originating from Pulakesin II's conquest of the region in the eastern Deccan in 624 CE. Pulakesin II strategically appointed his **brother Vishnuvardhana** as **governor**, leading to the establishment of the Eastern Chalukyas. After Pulakesin II's death, Vishnuvardhana declared the independence of the Eastern Chalukyas, marking a crucial turning point and relocating the capital to **Rajamahendravaram**. The Eastern Chalukyas played a significant role in the geopolitical landscape, often caught in conflicts between the Cholas and Western Chalukyas due to the strategic importance of the Vengi region. Their rule witnessed a cultural renaissance, fostering **Telugu literature, poetry,** and art for over five centuries. Despite their influence, the Eastern Chalukyas remained under **Chola suzerainty** until 1189 CE, eventually succumbing to the expansions of the Hoysalas and Yadavas, marking the end of their legacy in Vengi.

Vishnuvardhana (c. 624 CE):

- He was appointed as governor by Pulakesin II.
- Declared independence after the demise of Pulakesin II.

Vijayaditya II (c. 808–847 CE):

- Vijayaditya II orchestrated successful military campaigns against two major powerhouses of the time – the **Rashtrakutas and the Gangas.** His strategic acumen and military prowess were instrumental in securing victories against these formidable opponents.
- The scope of Vijayaditya II's influence extended beyond the Deccan as he led impactful campaigns into **Gujarat**. These ventures not only showcased his military might but also solidified the territorial integrity of the Eastern Chalukya kingdom.
- The **Rashtrakuta inscriptions** themselves bear witness to the undeniable success of Vijayaditya II. They openly acknowledge their defeat at his hands, conceding that the luster and grandeur of their once-mighty kingdom were metaphorically **'drowned in the ocean of the Chalukyas.'**

Vijayaditya III (c. 848–892 CE):

- Vijayaditya III, a pivotal ruler of the Eastern Chalukya dynasty, held sway over a vibrant period marked by extensive territorial conquests and diplomatic acumen.
- Vijayaditya III's reign was characterized by claims of triumphant forays into various regions.
- **Military Success:** He asserted dominance over not only traditional rivals like the Pallavas, Pandyas, and Gangas but also extended his sway over the **Rashtrakutas, the Kalachuris, and South Kosala.** This multifaceted conquest showcased his military prowess and strategic finesse.
- **Diplomacy:** Beyond military triumphs, Vijayaditya III exhibited a diplomatic flair by providing refuge to a Chola king. This act of sheltering a rival monarch underscored not only his political astuteness but also a nuanced understanding of regional power dynamics.

Bhima I (c. 892–922 CE):

- Bhima I faced a significant challenge during his rule when he was captured by the **Rashtrakuta** king. This period of captivity, though a setback, did not dampen Bhima I's spirit.
- Despite being held captive, Bhima I was later released, and he managed to stage a resurgence in the political arena. His ability to navigate through adversity showcased resilience and contributed to the dynasty's continued presence on the political stage.

Vijayaditya IV (c. 922 CE, for 6 months):

- Vijayaditya IV ascended to the throne around 922 CE, marking a period of transient leadership for the Eastern Chalukya dynasty. His reign endured for merely six months, but during this brief period, the seeds of succession disputes were sown, casting a shadow over the dynasty's stability.
- The short-lived reign of Vijayaditya IV became a catalyst for succession disputes, exacerbated by overt interference from the Rashtrakutas. The Rashtrakutas openly backed various claimants, further destabilizing the political landscape and triggering a series of rapid successions.

Conquest by Chola King Rajaraja (999 CE):

- The political saga of the Eastern Chalukyas took a decisive turn in 999 CE when the Chola king **Rajaraja** orchestrated the conquest of Vengi.
- This marked the culmination of a series of challenges and internal conflicts that ultimately led to the eclipse of the Eastern Chalukya dynasty.

The Eastern Chalukya dynasty's history is marked by the dynamic leadership of rulers like Vijayaditya II, known for military prowess, and Vijayaditya III, who boasted victories over various powerful kingdoms. However, the later period witnessed succession disputes and interference from external powers like the Rashtrakutas, ultimately culminating in the conquest by the Cholas in 999 CE.

Chalukyas of Lata

In their nascent phase, the Chalukyas of Lata commenced their political journey as vassals under the suzerainty of the Western Chalukyas. Serving as feudatories, they contributed to the larger framework of the Western Chalukya dynasty during its zenith.

Over the course of the 10th and 11th centuries, a transformative shift occurred within the Chalukyas of Lata. Capitalizing on the waning influence of the Western Chalukyas, they asserted their autonomy and boldly proclaimed independence from their former overlords.

Confrontation with the Chalukyas of Gujarat:

The assertion of independence by the Chalukyas of Lata did not go unchallenged. As they sought to consolidate their rule in the Lata region, they came into direct conflict with the emerging power of the Chalukyas of Gujarat, also known as the **Solankis**. This marked the denouement of the independent rule of the Chalukyas of Lata, as they succumbed to the ascendancy of the Chalukyas of Gujarat.

Barappa (c. 970–990 CE):

- Barappa, a pivotal figure in the dynasty, ascended to prominence around 970–990 CE. His early career unfolded in the service of the Western Chalukya king, **Tailapa II**, where he distinguished himself as a capable general.
- Acknowledging Barappa's military acumen, Tailapa II appointed him as the governor of the strategically significant Lata region. This marked a significant elevation in Barappa's status within the Western Chalukya administration.
- Barappa's rule involves a strategic alliance with the **Shakambhari king.** Together, they orchestrated a joint military campaign that reportedly resulted in the defeat of **Mularaja**, the Solanki ruler. This victory underscored Barappa's military prowess and strategic alliances.
- The zenith of Barappa's career faced a tragic turn with the invasion led by **Chamunda-raja, the son of Mularaja.**
- According to **Hemachandra's Devyashraya Kavya**, Chamunda-raja orchestrated an incursion into Lata, culminating in the untimely demise of Barappa.

Gogi-raja (c. 990–1010 CE):

- Gogi-raja, the son of Barappa, emerged as a key figure in the Chalukyas of Lata during his rule from approximately 990 to 1010 CE.
- He is credited with potentially revitalizing the family's fortunes in the Lata region after the setbacks faced during Barappa's demise.

Kirti-raja (c. 1010–1030 CE):

- Kirti-raja assumed the reins of power during a crucial period from around 1010 to 1030 CE.
- A significant historical artifact is the 940 Shaka (1018 CE) copper plate inscription discovered in Surat. This inscription not only provides a glimpse into Kirti-raja's era but also meticulously lists his esteemed ancestors, including **Gogi, Barappa, and Nimbarka.**

Vatsa-raja (c. 1030–1050 CE):

- Vatsa-raja's remarkable achievement is the construction of a golden umbrella for the deity Somanatha, showcasing Vatsa-raja's devotion and patronage to religious endevours.
- Additionally, he is credited with the establishment of a **sattra** (a free food canteen) reflecting his commitment to philanthropy and social welfare.

Trilochana-pala (c. 1050–1070 CE):

- Trilochana-pala, who reigned from around 1050 to 1070 CE, marked a later phase in the history of the Chalukyas of Lata.
- **Copper Plate Inscriptions:** Two copper plate inscriptions, dated 972 **Shaka** (1050 CE in **Ekallahara**) and 1051 CE in **Surat**, provide insights into his rule, bestowing upon him the title of **Maha-Mandaleshvara.**
  - The inscriptions present a captivating narrative detailing the mythical origin of the Chalukya lineage.
  - According to these inscriptions, the family's progenitor emerged from the **chuluka**, symbolizing a vessel or a folded palm associated with the creator deity **Virinchi**.
  - Guided by divine counsel, the progenitor entered matrimony with a Rashtrakuta princess from **Kanyakubja**, setting the foundation for royal alliances.
- Trilochana-pala's benevolence is evident in the 1050 CE inscription, documenting his donation of the **Ekallahara** village to a **Brahmin** named **Taraditya**. This gesture underscores the dynasty's patronage of Brahminical institutions and the fostering of religious practices.
- Despite the earlier resurgence, historical records suggest that the Chalukyas of Lata faced adversity and were possibly defeated by the Solankis by 1074 CE.

Trilochana-pala's era, marked by royal alliances, philanthropy, and regional governance, contributes to the intricate narrative of medieval Indian history. The decline of the dynasty by 1074 CE signifies a transition in power dynamics, paving the way for subsequent rulers and regional shifts.

Pallavas of Kanchi

During the period spanning the 4th to the 6th centuries CE, the political narrative of the far south was primarily shaped by two prominent kingdoms: the **Pallavas of Kanchi** and the **Pandyas of Madurai.**

Brief Phase of Ikshvakus:

- Following the decline of the Satavahanas in the eastern part of the peninsula, particularly in the **Krishna-Guntur region**, the **Ikshvakus** emerged on the historical stage. These local Tribe adopted the illustrious name of the **Ikshvakus**, possibly to underscore the antiquity of their lineage.
- Noteworthy monuments and copper plate inscriptions found at **Nagarjunakonda and Dharanikota** are attributed to the Ikshvakus. However, their ascendancy was later replaced by the **Pallavas**.

From Pastoral Tribe to Dominant Force:

- The term "**Pallava**," derived from Sanskrit, translates to "**creeper**," akin to the Tamil word "**tondi**," which also conveys the meaning of a robber.
- The Pallavas, believed to have originated as a pastoral local tribe, established their authority in **Tondaimandalam**, the region between the north **Penner** and north **Vellar** rivers.
  - This encompassed **southern Andhra Pradesh and northern Tamil Nadu**, with the capital situated at **Kanchi** (modern **Kanchipuram**).
- Under Pallava rule, Kanchi evolved into a significant temple town and a thriving center for trade and commerce.
- Inscriptions make reference to early Pallava kings, with figures like **Shivaskandavarman** appearing in the early 4th century CE.
- However, the pivotal role in propelling the Pallavas to prominence during the last quarter of the 6th century was played by **Simhavishnu**. His reign marked a transformative period for the Pallavas, laying the foundations for their ascendancy in the southern political landscape.

The Pallavas' trajectory from a local tribe to a dominant force not only impacted the geopolitical dynamics of southern India but also contributed to the cultural and architectural heritage of the region. The rise of Simhavishnu set the stage for the Pallavas' continued influence, leaving an indelible mark on the history and cultural landscape of Tondaimandalam.

Simhavishnu: Architect of Pallava Power

- Simhavishnu, a pivotal figure in Pallava history, is credited with defeating the **Ikshvakus**, consolidating his power, and laying a firm foundation for the Pallava empire.
- **Establishment:** Faced with political disturbances attributed to the **Kalabhras**, Simhavishnu undertook decisive measures. His conquests extended southward, reaching the Kaveri River, and he established the Pallava capital at **Kanchi**, strategically located south of Chennai.
- **Notable Title:** Simhavishnu bore the illustrious title of "**Avanisimha**," signifying the **Lion of the Earth**.
  - This title not only underscored his military prowess but also symbolized his role as a dominant ruler, securing the Pallavas' territorial influence.
- **Onset of Stability:** Simhavishnu's reign brought about a period of stability, marking the end of political upheavals caused by external factors. His strategic territorial expansions and establishment of a new capital contributed significantly to the political consolidation of the Pallava empire.
- Beyond his military and political achievements, Simhavishnu's rule had a lasting impact on the cultural and historical legacy of the Pallavas.

Mahendravarman I (c. 590 to 630 CE):

- **Conflict and Defeat:** Mahendravarman I's reign, spanning from approximately 590 to 630 CE, was marked by heightened conflict with the Chalukyas of Badami. Notably, he faced defeat at the hands of **Pulekshin II at Pullalur**, near Kanchi, leading to the annexation of the northern part of the Pallava kingdom by the Chalukyas.

Fig. 13.6: Mamallapuram Rock Carvings

- **Cultural Contribution:** Renowned as a great patron of the arts, Mahendravarman I significantly contributed to the cultural landscape of his kingdom. His support extended to various art forms, reflecting his appreciation for creativity and expression.
  - Mahendravarman I's cultural influence extended to literature, as he was not only a ruler but also a poet and musician. His notable literary work, '**Mattavilasa Prahasanna**', exemplifies his creative pursuits and intellectual interests.
  - He initiated the construction of the famous cave temple at **Mahabalipuram**, showcasing his commitment to the development of architectural marvels. Mahabalipuram, with its rock-cut temples and sculptures, stands as a testament to his vision for grand artistic expression.
    - The Mahabalipuram shore temple features three shrines, including two to **Shiva** and one to **Vishnu**, with notable sculptures and carvings that have suffered erosion over the centuries.
- The Rajarajeswara or Brahadeeshwarar temple in Thanjavur, completed in A.D. 1009 by Rajaraja Chola, is the largest and tallest among Indian temples. This temple is characterized by two large gopurams with an elaborate sculptural program conceived along with the temple.
- **Change of Faith:** Initially following the **Jaina faith**, Mahendravarman I underwent a religious transformation and embraced **Shaivism**. This shift was influenced by the teachings of **Appar**, a prominent **Shaiva saint** of that era.
- Mahendravarman I's reign left an indelible mark on Pallava history, not only for his military encounters but

also for his role as a cultural patron. His contributions to **literature, music, and architecture** added a distinctive layer to the rich tapestry of Pallava civilization.

Narasimhavarman I/Mahamalla (c.630–668 CE):

- Narasimhavarman I, also known as **Mahamalla**, ascended to the Pallava throne around 630 CE. His reign was defined by a strong determination to avenge his father's defeat at the hands of Pulkeshin II.
  - Mahamalla not only succeeded in defeating Pulkeshin II but went further by invading the Western Chalukyan kingdom and capturing Badami.
- **Military Acumen:** Mahamalla's military successes were not solely confined to avenging his father. He formed a strategic alliance with the **Sri Lankan prince, Manavarma**, and together they captured **Badami**. This victory demonstrated Mahamalla's prowess as a military strategist.
  - **Expansion:** The reign of Narasimhavarman I saw a remarkable expansion of Pallava influence. He claimed victories over not only the Chalukyas but also the **Cholas, Cheras, and Kalabhras,** showcasing his military acumen in dealing with various regional powers.
  - **Naval Support to Manavarma:** Narasimhavarman I dispatched naval expeditions in support of his ally **Manavarma**. However, despite initial efforts, Manavarma faced defeat, leading him to seek political refuge at Mahamalla's court.
- **Contributions in Architecture:** Beyond his military exploits, Mahamalla was an enthusiastic patron of architecture. He played a pivotal role in the construction of the port of **Mamallapuram** and commissioned the famous rathas **(monolithic chariot-shaped structures)** at Mahabalipuram.
  - In honor of Narasimhavarman I, Mahabalipuram is also known as **Mamallapuram**.

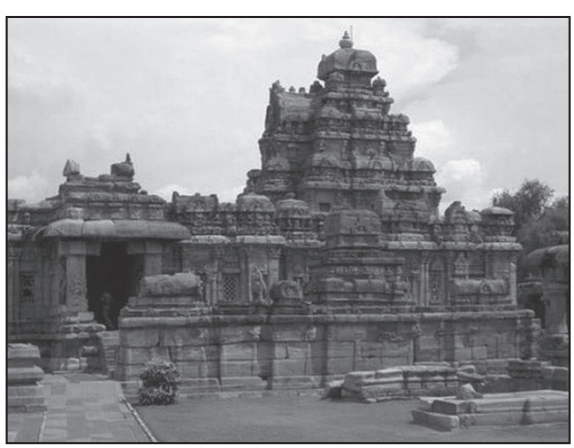


Fig. 13.7: Ratha Temple at Mahabalipuram

- Narasimhavarman I's reign left an enduring legacy, characterized by both military triumphs and significant contributions to the architectural landscape of Pallava civilization.

Mahendravarman II (c. 668–670 CE):

- Mahendravarman II, who ascended the Pallava throne around 668 CE, inherited the ongoing conflict with the Chalukyas from his predecessors.
- **Legacy of Conflicts:** Despite efforts to find resolution or establish a balance of power, Mahendravarman II found himself entangled in the enduring hostilities with the Chalukyas. The conflict, marked by territorial disputes and political rivalry, persisted throughout his rule.
- **Untimely Demise:** Mahendravarman II met his end while actively engaged in military campaigns against the Chalukyas. His commitment to defending Pallava interests on the battlefield underscores the intensity of the geopolitical struggle between the Pallavas and the Chalukyas.

Parameshvaraman I (c. 670–695 CE):

- Notable for his military prowess, Parameshvaraman I achieved significant victories by defeating the **Chalukya king Vikramaditya** and the **Gangas.**
- Contributed to the cultural landscape by commissioning the construction of a temple in the pivotal city of **Kanchi**, symbolizing Pallava's patronage of religious architecture.

Narsimhavarman II/ Rajasimha (c.700–728 CE):

- **Reign of Peace:** After Narasimhavarman I, Mahendravarman II and Parameswarvarman I took the reins of the Pallava kingdom, and the ongoing conflict with the Chalukyas persisted.
  - Subsequently, Narasimhavarman II, also known as Rajasimha, ascended to the Pallava throne. His rule marked a peaceful period, focusing on the development of art and architecture.
  - Rajasimha fostered diplomatic relations by sending embassies to China, contributing to the flourishing maritime trade during his reign.
- **Architectural Contribution:** Notable constructions from this era include the **Shore Temple** at **Mamallapuram** and the **Kailasanatha Temple** at **Kanchipuram.**
- **Patron of Art and Literature:** Rajasimha demonstrated a keen interest in the arts and literature, with the renowned Sanskrit scholar Dandin gracing his court.
  - **Titles:** Adopting titles such as **Sankarabhakta, Vadhyavidyadhara,** and **Agamapriya**, he showcased his commitment to various aspects of cultural and intellectual pursuits.

Following Rajasimha, Parameswaravarman II **(c.728–731 CE)** and Nandivarman II **(c.731–795 CE)** assumed leadership. The Pallava dynasty's rule endured until the late ninth century A.D. The conclusive chapter of Pallava rule unfolded when the **Chola king Aditya I** defeated the last **Pallava ruler, Aparajita,** and annexed the Kanchi region.

This victory marked the end of the Pallava dynasty's reign, ushering in a new era in the southern Indian political landscape.

Dantivarman (c.795–846 CE):

- Dantivarman encountered the military challenges posed by the **Rashtrakutas**, underscoring the geopolitical complexities of the time.
- The Pallava reign continued while facing the invasion of Kanchi by Rashtrakuta king Govind III during his rule.

Nandivarman III (c.846–869 CE):

- Achieved a notable victory by defeating the **Pandyas**, showcasing the Pallavas' military resilience.

Aparajita (c.880–893 CE):

- The last known Pallava king, Aparajita, played a crucial role in the alliance with the **Western Gangas** and **Cholas**, securing victory over the Pandyas at the battle of **Shripurambiyam**.

In the year 893 CE, the Chola king Aditya I successfully toppled the Pallavas, marking a significant political transition as the region of **Tondaimandalam** came under Chola suzerainty. Beyond the political shift, the Pallava era left an enduring cultural impact. Notably, the Pallavas fostered the flourishing of Tamil bhakti literature, a form of devotional poetry that played a pivotal role in shaping the cultural and religious fabric of the region. Additionally, the Pallavas were instrumental in promoting the distinctive Dravidian style of art and architecture, particularly in southern India.

One of the cultural milestones under Pallava patronage was the ascent of **Mahabalipuram** as a paramount center for temple architecture. The architectural marvels constructed during this period, such as the iconic Shore Temple, exemplify the unique artistic expressions that characterized the Dravidian style. The Pallavas' influence extended beyond mere political dominance, becoming a catalyst for the cultural evolution that laid the groundwork for subsequent developments in Tamil literature and temple artistry in the southern part of the Indian subcontinent.

Administration of the Pallavas:

- The Pallavas instituted a well-organized administrative system, characterized by division into administrative units known as Kottams.
  - Each Kottam was overseen by appointed officers under the central authority of the king. The king, assisted by capable ministers, held a central role in administration and served as the ultimate arbiter of justice. Additionally, the Pallavas maintained a proficient military force.
- **Tax Free Land Grants:** The king played a crucial role in supporting religious institutions and scholars. Land grants known as **Devadhana** were provided to temples, while **Brahmadeya** grants were allocated to Brahmins.
- **Agriculture:** The central government took responsibility for developing irrigation facilities, as evidenced by the construction of numerous **tanks**, including those at **Mahendravadi** and **Mamandoor,** during the reign of Mahendravarman I.
- **Taxation:** Pallava inscriptions provide insights into the tax system of the era.
  - Land tax constituted a primary source of government revenue, with exemptions granted to Brahmadeya and Devadhana lands.
  - Traders and artisans, including carpenters, goldsmiths, washermen, oil pressers, and weavers, were contributors to the government's tax revenue.
- **Local Administration:** The Pallava inscriptions also shed light on the village assemblies known as **sabhas** and their committees.
  - These local bodies played a crucial role in governance, maintaining records of village lands, overseeing local affairs, and managing temples.
- The administrative structure of the Pallavas reflected a systematic and organized approach to governance, addressing both religious and secular aspects of society.

Society and Religion under the Pallavas:

- The Pallava period brought about significant changes in Tamil society, marked by the crystallization of the caste system into a more rigid structure.
- **Rise of Brahminical Religion:** Brahmins ascended to a prominent position within the social hierarchy, receiving land grants from kings and nobles. Additionally, they were entrusted with the responsibility of managing temples.
  - The Pallava era witnessed a transformative shift in religious dynamics, with the rise of **Saivism** and **Vaishnavism** alongside the **decline of Buddhism and Jainism.**
  - **Bhakti Movement: Saiva Nayanars** and **Vaishnava Alwars** played pivotal roles in fostering Saivism and Vaishnavism, contributing to what is now known as the Bhakti Movement.
    - Notably, they composed their hymns in the Tamil language, emphasizing the significance of devotion or Bhakti.
    - The **Devaram**, composed by **Nayanmars**, and the **Nalayradivyaprabandam**, composed by **Alwars**, stand as notable examples of religious literature from this era.
  - The construction of temples by the Pallava kings played a crucial role in facilitating the spread of Saivism and Vaishnavism.
  - These religious edifices became centers for the propagation and practice of these two faiths, further solidifying their influence on Tamil society.
- The Pallava period thus witnessed a multifaceted transformation in social and religious aspects, shaping the cultural landscape of the time.

Education and Literature:

- The Pallavas demonstrated a strong commitment to education and became notable patrons of learning, with their capital Kanchi emerging as an ancient center of knowledge.

- The **Ghatika at Kanchi** gained popularity, attracting students not only from various regions of India but also from abroad.
- **Mayurasarman**, the founder of the **Kadamba dynasty**, studied the **Vedas** at **Kanchi**, showcasing the city's scholarly prominence.
- **Dinganaga**, a Buddhist writer, also came to study at Kanchi, highlighting its diverse educational offerings.
- **Dharmapala**, who later became the **Head of Nalanda University**, hailed from Kanchi.
- During the time of Simhavishnu, the great Sanskrit scholar Bharavi lived.

❑ **Dandin**, another **Sanskrit** writer, adorned the court of **Narasimhavarman II.**

❑ Mahendravaraman I, a Pallava ruler, contributed to Sanskrit literature by composing the play **Mattavilasaprahasanam**.

❑ The Pallava period also witnessed significant developments in Tamil literature. **Perundevanar**, patronized by Nandivarman II, translated the **Mahabharata** into Tamil as **Bharathavenba**.

❑ Additionally, music and dance flourished during the Pallava period, contributing to the cultural richness of the time.

❑ The Pallavas left a lasting legacy in the realms of education, literature, and the arts, fostering a vibrant intellectual and cultural milieu in their domain.

Pallava Art and Architecture:

The Pallava era marked a significant period in the history of temple construction, particularly renowned for introducing the art of excavating temples from rock.

The evolution of **Dravidian style** temple architecture began under the Pallava rule, progressing from cave temples to monolithic rathas and culminating in structural temples. This development unfolded in four distinct stages.

❑ **Rock-Cut Temples (First Stage): Mahendravarman I** pioneered the rock-cut temples, visible at locations such as **Mandagappattu, Mahendravadi, Mamandur, Dalavanur, Tiruchirappalli, Vallam, Siyamangalam,** and **Tirukalukkunram.**

❑ **Monolithic Rathas and Mandapas (Second Stage): Narasimhavarman I** played a significant role in the second stage, marked by the creation of monolithic rathas and mandapas at **Mamallapuram**.

- The **Panchapanadava** rathas showcase five distinct temple architecture styles, and the mandapas, including **Mahishasuramardhini Mandapam, Tirumurthi Mandapam,** and **Varaha Madapam**, feature beautiful sculptures.

❑ **Structural Temples (Third Stage):** In the third stage, **Rajasimha** introduced structural temples constructed from soft sand rocks. The **Kailasanatha temple** in Kanchi and the **Shore temple** in Mamallapuram stand as exemplary early structural temples of the Pallavas.

- The Kailasanatha temple is particularly renowned as a masterpiece of Pallava art.

❑ **Later Structural Temples (Fourth Stage):** The final stage of Pallava art includes structural temples built by the later Pallavas. Notable examples include the **Vaikundaperumal temple, Muktheeswara temple,** and **Matagenswara temples** in **Kanchipuram.**

Sculpture and Open Art Gallery:

❑ Beyond temples, the Pallavas significantly contributed to sculpture, evident in the intricate carvings found in temples and the "Open Art Gallery" at Mamallapuram.

- Notable sculptures include the **'Descent of the Ganges'** or the **'Penance of Arjuna,'** often referred to as a fresco painting in stone.
- The meticulous details and thematic richness, including figures like a **lice-picking monkey, colossal elephants,** and the standing **'ascetic cat,'** exemplify the sculptors' extraordinary talent during the Pallava period.

Pandyas of Madurai

The Pandyas of Madurai, during the early medieval times, remain somewhat enigmatic due to the limited historical records available. Engaged in internecine conflicts, particularly with contemporary powers like the Pallavas, the Pandyas held sway over Madurai and the Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu.

Kadungon (c. 560–590 CE):

❑ Kadungon, a significant figure in the early Pandya lineage, was succeeded by his son, **Maravarman Avanishulamani.**

Maravarman Avanishulamani (c. 590–620 CE):

❑ Maravarman Avanishulamani is credited with terminating the rule of the **Kalabhras** in the region and revitalizing the Pandya dynasty.

❑ The Kalabhras, viewed unfavorably during this period, had challenged the authority of the Pallavas and other rulers in Tamil lands.

❑ The joint efforts of the Pandyas, Pallavas, and Chalukyas of Badami were needed to suppress the widespread revolt of the Kalabhras.

❑ Notably, the Kalabhras had disrupted the brahmadeya rights granted to Brahmanas in numerous villages, favoring Buddhist monasteries.

Rajasimha (c. 735-765 CE):

❑ Rajasimha earned the epithet **Pallavabhanjana (breaker of the Pallavas**) by defeating the Pallavas. His reign marked an expansion of the Pandya empire.

Jatila Parantaka Nedunjadaiyan (c. 756–815 CE):

❑ Continuing the expansion of the Pandyan empire, Jatila Parantaka Nedunjadaiyan played a crucial role in shaping the territorial dynamics of the region.

Shrimara Shrivallabha (c. 815–862 CE):

- Unfortunately, the Pandyas faced a decline, culminating in their complete subjugation by the **Cholas** in the 10th century.
- The Cholas, another powerful dynasty of the region, emerged triumphant, marking the end of the Pandya dominance.

The historical narrative of the Pandyas during this period remains obscured, yet the available glimpses provide insights into their political struggles, territorial expansions, and their role in countering regional challenges alongside other influential dynasties.

Kadambas of Banavasi

Since the 4th century CE, the Kadambas have held sway over the northern regions of **Karnataka and Konkan,** establishing their capital at **Vaijayanti or Banavasi** in the northern **Kanara** district of Karnataka. Co-existing with the Pallavas, they asserted their lineage as **Brahmanas** and exhibited their generosity towards the Brahmanical community through substantial gifts.

The inception of the Kadamba dynasty can be traced back to **Mayurasharman**, who, in a significant historical event, triumphed over the Pallavas with the assistance of forest tribes. In acknowledgment of Mayurasharman's authority, the Pallavas formally conferred upon him the royal insignia, solidifying his status as a prominent ruler. This period marked the foundation and early ascendancy of the Kadamba dynasty, highlighting their strategic prowess in overcoming regional challenges and establishing their rule.

Western Gangas of Mysore

The Western Gangas of Mysore emerged as a significant power during the same period as the Pallavas. Initially serving as **feudatories under the Pallavas**, they eventually established their independent rule in the southern regions of Karnataka. Geographically situated between the Pallavas in the east and the Kadambas in the west, the Western Gangas played a crucial role in shaping the political landscape of the region.

The earliest capital of the Western Gangas was situated near **Kolar, a region** renowned for its **substantial gold resources**, which significantly contributed to the wealth of their kingdom. Notably, the Western Gangas displayed a strong inclination towards Jainism, evident in their extensive land grants made to Jain communities. This cultural and religious patronage showcased the unique dynamics of the Western Gangas' rule and their influence on the socio-religious fabric of southern Karnataka during their time.

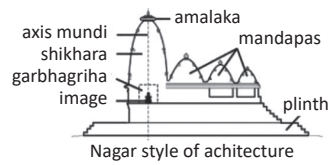
TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE IN ANCIENT INDIA

The surviving architectural remnants from Ancient and Medieval India primarily consist of religious structures. Throughout the country, the diverse architectural styles of temples emerged as a result of geographical, ethnic, and historical variations.

Basic Features of Hindu Temples

There are **two main temple orders:** Nagara in the north and Dravida in the south. Additionally, the **Vesara** style occasionally appears as an independent architectural expression, formed through a deliberate blend of the Nagara and Dravida orders. As temples evolved into more intricate structures, the incorporation of rhythmically projecting, symmetrical walls and niches became a common practice, providing additional surfaces for intricate sculptures. Despite these elaborations, the temples retained their fundamental shrine plan, showcasing a harmonious balance between complexity and adherence to the core architectural principles.

▸ **NAGARA STYLE OF TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE**



▸ **DRAVIDA STYLE OF TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE**

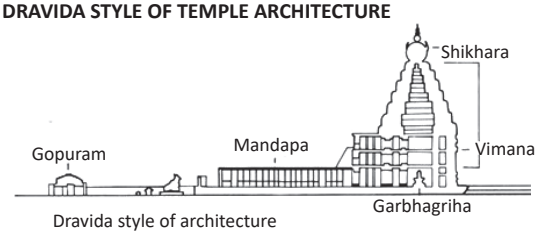


Fig. 13.8: Nagara and Dravida style of Temple Architecture

- **Sanctum (Garbhagriha):**
  - Small cubicle with a single entrance, evolving into a larger chamber over time.
  - Purpose is to house the main deity.
- **Entrance to the Temple:**
  - May be a portico or colonnaded hall known as a mandapa.
  - Provides space for a large number of worshippers.
- **Freestanding Temples:**
  - Feature a mountain-like spire.
  - Takes the form of a curving shikhar in North India or a pyramidal tower (vimana) in South India.
- **Vahan:**
  - Mount or vehicle of the temple's main deity.
  - Standard pillar or dhvaj is placed axially before the sanctum.
- **Mithun Sculptures:**
  - Common in many Hindu temples.
  - They depict embracing couples and are considered auspicious.
  - Usually placed at the entrance, on an exterior wall, or between the mandapa and the main shrine.

Nagara or North Indian Temple Style:

- North Indian temples often feature a **stone platform** with **steps** leading to the entire structure.
- In contrast to South Indian temples, there is a **lack of elaborate boundary walls** or **gateways**.

- Early temples typically had a single tower (**shikhara**), while later ones often had multiple towers.
- The **garbhagriha**, housing the main deity, is consistently positioned directly beneath the tallest tower.
- Nagara temples have various subdivisions based on the shape of their shikhara. Different regions in India use distinct names for temple parts; the square-based shikhara with inward-curving walls is commonly known as **'latina'** or **'rekha-prasada.'**
  - Another prevalent Nagara architectural form is the **phamsana**, which is broader and shorter than the latina, with a roof composed of multiple slabs rising to a central point.
  - The **valabhi type**, the third sub-type, comprises rectangular buildings with roofs rising into vaulted chambers.

Dravida or South Indian Temple Style:

- Dravida temples are enclosed within a compound wall, unlike Nagara temples. The front wall features a central entrance gateway known as a **gopuram**.
- The main temple tower, called **vimana** in Tamil Nadu, has a stepped pyramid shape, contrasting with the curving **shikhara** of North Indian temples.
- Complexes often include a **temple tank or water reservoir.**
- Subsidiary shrines can either be incorporated within the main temple tower or located as distinct, separate small shrines.
- Famous temple towns in Tamil Nadu, such as **Kanchipuram, Thanjavur, Madurai,** and **Kumbakonam**, served as rich administrative centers during the 8th to 12th centuries.
- The temple's role extended beyond religious matters to control vast land areas.
- Dravida temples have subdivisions with five different shapes: **square (kuta** or **caturasra), rectangular (shala** or **ayatasra), elliptical (gaja-prishta** or **vrittayata), circular (vritta),** and **octagonal (ashtasra).**

Temples in Central India:

- Ancient temples in **Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh,** and **Rajasthan** share common traits, notably being constructed from sandstone.
- Some of the oldest surviving structural temples from the **Gupta** period are located in **Madhya Pradesh.**

Fig. 13.9: Lakshmana temple of Khajuraho

- The crowning elements, **amalak and kalash**, are prevalent on all Nagara temples from this period.
- Notable examples include:
  - **Udaigiri:** Located near **Vidisha**, part of a larger Hindu cave shrine complex.
  - **Sanchi:** Near sanchi Stupa, forming the part of a larger complex.
  - **Deogarh:** Built in the early sixth century CE in **Lalitpur** district, Uttar Pradesh. A classic late Gupta Period temple in the **panchayatana style**, featuring a curving latina or **rekha-prasada** type of **shikhara.**
  - **Chausath Yogini Temple:** Predating the tenth century, built between the 7th and 10th centuries, dedicated to goddesses associated with the rise of **Tantric** worship.
  - **Khajuraho Temples:** Many devoted to Hindu gods and some to Jain deities. Known for extensive **erotic sculptures**, reflecting the equal importance given to erotic expression and spiritual pursuits. Notable temples include:
    - **Lakshmana Temple:** Dedicated to **Vishnu**, built in 954 by **Chandela** king **Dhanga**. A nagara temple on a high platform accessed by stairs.
    - **Kandariya Mahadeo Temple:** Considered the epitome of temple architecture in Central India.

Temples in Western India:

- Temples in the north-western regions of India, including **Gujarat, Rajasthan,** and **western Madhya Pradesh**, are abundant.
- **Stones Used:** The stone utilized for temple construction exhibits a variety of colors and types. While **sandstone** is the most common, some 10th to 12th-century temple sculptures showcase **grey to black basalt.**
  - Particularly notable is the use of manipulatable soft **white marble**, seen in 10th-12th century **Jain temples** in **Mount Abu** and the 15th-century temple at **Ranakpur**.
- One of the region's significant art-historical sites is **Samlaji** in **Gujarat**.

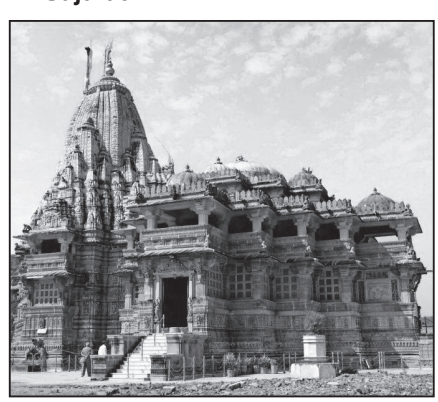


Fig. 13.10: Shamlaji Temple in Gujarat.

- The **Sun Temple** at **Modhera**, dating back to the early 11th century, was constructed by **Raja Bhimdev I** of the **Solanki Dynasty** in **1026.**

- In front of the temple, there is an impressive rectangular **stepped tank** known as the **Surya Kund**, considered one of the grandest temple tanks in India.
- During the equinoxes, the sun directly illuminates the central shrine of the temple, adding a unique astronomical aspect to its significance.

Fig. 13.11: Sun Temple, Modhera

Temples in Eastern India:

❑ **Bengal:**

- **Terracotta** was a primary construction medium, depicting **Buddhist** and **Hindu** deities in Bengal until the 7th century.
- The **Pala** style (9th-11th centuries) and **Sena** style (mid-11th to mid-13th centuries) characterize sculptures in Bengal.

Fig. 13.12: Siddheshvara Mahadeva Temple, Barakar

- **Siddheshvara Mahadeva Temple** in **Barakar, Burdwan** District, exemplifies the early **Pala** style with a tall curving **shikhara**.
- **Purlia temples' black to grey basalt** and **chlorite stone pillars** influenced early Bengal sultanate buildings at **Gaur** and **Pandua.**
- In the Mughal period, **terracotta brick** temples emerged in Bengal and Bangladesh, blending local techniques with **bamboo huts.**

❑ **Assam:**

- In Assam, a distinct regional style developed by the 12th-14th centuries, blending the **Tais'** migration from Upper Burma with Bengal's Pala style, known as the **Ahom** style.
- The **Kamakhya temple** in Assam, built in the 17th century, is dedicated to **Goddess Kamakhya.**

❑ **Odisha:**

- Odisha temples, mainly found in ancient **Kalinga**, exhibit three architectural orders: **rekhapida, pidhadeul,** and **khakra.**
- Main temple ground plans are typically **square**, transitioning to **circular** in the crowning mastaka.
- **Shikharas** (**deuls**) are vertical, curving sharply inwards towards the top.
- **Mandapas** (**jagamohana**) precede the deuls, and boundary walls are a common feature.

Fig. 13.13: Sun Temple, Konark

- The **Konark Sun Temple**, dating around 1240, stands on a high base with walls adorned in extensive ornamental carvings.
  - ❒ Detailed sculptures include twelve pairs of enormous wheels, symbolizing the chariot wheels of the Sun god. The entrance staircase features sculpted horses driving the chariot, a nod to Sun God mythology.

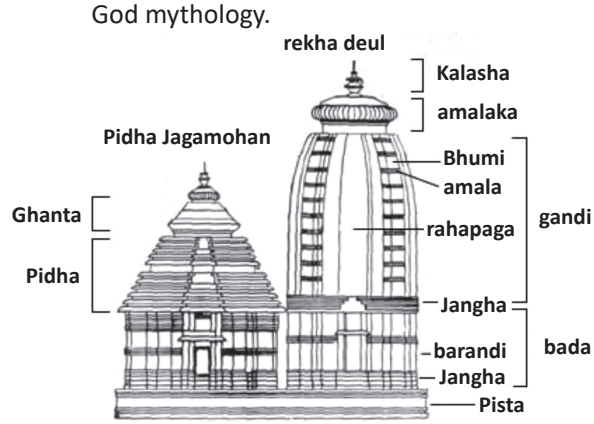


Fig. 13.14: Odhisa style Temples

Temples in the Hills:

❑ Unique architectural styles developed in the hilly regions of **Kumaon, Garhwal, Himachal,** and **Kashmir.**

❑ Kashmir, influenced by prominent **Gandhara** sites, showed a strong Gandhara influence from the 5th century CE, blending with **Gupta** and **post-Gupta** traditions from **Sarnath, Mathura, Gujarat,** and **Bengal.**

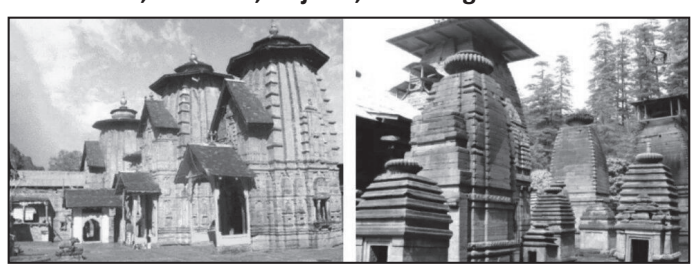


Fig. 13.15: Temple Complexes in Hills

Fig. 13.16: Temple Complexes in Hills

- Frequent travel by Brahmin pundits and Buddhist monks between **Kashmir, Garhwal, Kumaon**, and plains religious centers facilitated the intermingling and spread of both **Buddhist** and **Hindu** traditions in the hills.
- The hills had a tradition of wooden buildings with pitched roofs, and in some places, temples combined rekha-prasada or latina-style garbhagriha and shikhara with older forms of wooden mandapa architecture.
- The **Karkota** period in Kashmir, particularly during the 8th and 9th centuries, is significant for temple architecture, with **Pandrethan** being one of the most important temples.
  - **Pandrethan temple,** following the tradition of a water tank attached to the shrine, is constructed on a plinth in the middle of a tank.
- Temples in **Chamba** reveal a fusion of local traditions with post-Gupta styles, as evidenced by sculptures depicting **Mahishasuramardini** and **Narasimha** at the **Laksna-Devi Mandir.**
- In **Kumaon**, temples at **Jageshwar** near **Almora** and **Champavat** near **Pithoragarh** serve as classic examples of **Nagara architecture** in the region.

Deccan Temple Architecture:

- In regions like **Karnataka**, temple architecture in the Deccan exhibits various styles influenced by both North and South Indian traditions.
- Ellora's ambitious projects, which began in the late 7th or early 8th century, reached grandeur.
- Around 750 CE, the Rashtrakutas assumed control of the Deccan from the early western Chalukyas, showcasing their pinnacle achievement in the **Kailashnath** temple at Ellora.
  - The Kailashnath temple is a complete dravida structure carved out of living rock, featuring a Nandi shrine, gopuram-like gateway, surrounding cloisters, subsidiary shrines, staircases, and an imposing vimana tower rising to thirty meters.
- In the southern Deccan, particularly in Karnataka, experimental hybrid styles of Vesara architecture emerged.
- The **Ravana Phadi cave** at **Aihole**, showcasing distinctive sculptural style, features important sculptures like Nataraja surrounded by saptamatrikas.
- The elaborate Virupaksha temple at Pattadakal, constructed during the reign of Vikramaditya II, is attributed to **Queen Loka Mahadevi**. Another significant temple is the Papnath temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva.
- **Lad Khan** temple in Karnataka's **Aihole** seems inspired by hill temples with wooden roofs but is constructed entirely from stone.
- The **Hoysaleswara temple** in **Halebid**, built in 1150, is made of dark schist stone by the Hoysala king, dedicated to **Shiva as Nataraja,** featuring a double structure with a spacious mandapa for music and dance.
- Founded in 1336, the Vijayanagara Empire, known as the 'city of victory,' synthesized dravidian temple architecture with Islamic styles from neighboring sultanates. International travelers such as **Niccolo di Conti** and **Domingo Paes** vividly documented the city's grandeur, and Sanskrit and Telugu works highlight its rich literary tradition.

CONCLUSION

In exploring the historical narratives of diverse dynasties across ancient India, a complex tapestry of political, cultural, and religious developments unfolds. The Maukharis, once subordinate to the Guptas, gained prominence in Kannauj, eventually merging with the Pushyabhutis under Harsha Vardhana. The Chalukyas of Badami navigated political intricacies, clashing with the Pallavas, and contributing significantly to art and architecture. The Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi played a pivotal role in shaping the Deccan's political landscape. The Pallavas, known for Simhavishnu's foundational reign and Mahendravarman I's arts patronage, yielded to the Cholas' might. The Pandyas of Madurai experienced a resurgence under Rajasimha but were eventually overshadowed by the Cholas. The Kadambas clashed with the Pallavas initially, establishing their dynasty in northern Karnataka. The Western Gangas of Mysore, once Pallava feudatories, rose to prominence in southern Karnataka. Each dynasty's contributions, ranging from political maneuvers to cultural patronage, collectively enrich India's historical narrative, leaving an enduring legacy.

Ancient History Chronology

14

Date/Century	Category	Event Description
500,000 BC	Early Settlement	Early human settlement in India. Use of **unpolished, rough stone** tools in **South India** and the **Sohan** River valley, **Pakistan**.
100,000 BC	Palaeolithic Tools	Tools discovered in the Chotanagpur plateau belong to this period, i.e. the lower Palaeolithic period.
25,000 BC	Domestication of Animals	Evidence of domestication of goats, sheep, and cattle in the **Belan Valley**, Uttar Pradesh.
25,000 - 10,000 BC	Tool Development	Tools from this period i.e. the Upper Palaeolithic period, are found in **Kurnool** district, **Andhra Pradesh**. Association with bone implements and animal remains.
Circa 10,000 BC	Start of Neolithic Phase	The beginning of the Neolithic phase was marked by **settled agricultural** communities, pottery, and polished stone tools.
Circa 3000 BC - 2500 BC	Cultural Transition - End of Neolithic Period	Beginning of the use of **metals**, notably **copper**, led to the Chalcolithic culture.
Circa 2500 BC - 1750 BC	Harappan Civilization	Existence of the Harappan Civilization.
2500 BC - 1750 BC	Harappan Extent	Harappan Civilization covered parts of **Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, Gujarat, Rajasthan**, and western **UP**.
	Harappan Cities	Major cities established: Harappa, Mohenjo-daro, Chanhu-daro, Lothal, Kalibangan, Banwali.
	Harappan Town Planning	Advanced town planning, use of baked bricks, impressive drainage system.
	Harappan Agriculture	Agriculture development: wheat, barley, peas, sesamum, mustard, and **rice** (**Lothal** c. 1800 BC).
	Harappan Animal Domestication	Domestication of oxen, buffaloes, goats, sheep, pigs, humped bulls, dogs, cats, asses, camels, elephants.
	Harappan Technology & Crafts	Use of **bronze** tools, skilled in pottery, seal-making, and bead-making.
	Harappan Trade	Extensive trade networks within the region and with **Mesopotamia**.
	Harappan Script	Development of the **pictographic** Harappan script, which remains undeciphered.
Circa 2000 BC	Aryan Movement	Aryans began making inroads into Western Asia.
Circa 2000 BC - 1800 BC	Pottery Culture	**Ochre-coloured pottery (OCP)** culture in the upper **Gangetic** basin, indicating early agricultural and artisanal settlements.
Circa 1750 BC	Decline of Harappan Civilisation	Gradual decline and disappearance of major cities, possibly due to environmental changes, natural disasters, or new populations or interplay of all these factors.
1800 BC - 800 BC	Chalcolithic Phase	The Chalcolithic phase in India was characterised by the use of stone and copper tools.

Date/Century	Category	Event Description
Circa 1500 BC	**Extent of Chalcolithic Culture**	Existence of black-and-red wheel-turned pottery in Rajasthan, MP, Maharashtra, Bihar, and West Bengal.
	Agriculture & Domestication	Evidence of domesticated animals and cultivation of food grains in southeastern Rajasthan, western Madhya Pradesh, and western Maharashtra.
	Archaeological Discovery	Discovery of painted pottery from **Navdatoli**.
	Settlement Patterns	Chalcolithic sites like Jorwe, Nevasa, and Daimabad in Maharashtra showed advanced settlement patterns.
	Village Economies	Fortified settlements in central and western MP, and western Maharashtra, indicating the beginning of village economies.
	Aryan Arrival in India	The earliest Aryan settlers, known as **Rig Vedic people**, appeared in the Indian subcontinent.
1600 BC - 1000 BC	**Archaeological Evidence from Rig Vedic Sites**	Discovery of **Painted Grey Ware (PGW)** in regions coinciding with Rig Vedic settlements.
Circa 1500 BC - 1000 BC	**Aryan Settlement**	Early Aryans settled in eastern **Afghanistan, Punjab**, and the fringes of western **Uttar Pradesh**.
1500 BC - 1000 BC	**Aryan Tribal Conflicts**	Internal tribal conflicts among Aryans and conflicts with indigenous inhabitants.
	Aryan Material Life	Development in agriculture and pastoral activities; importance of horses and chariots.
	Aryan Tribal Polity	The emergence of tribal chiefs (**Rajan**) and assemblies like **sabha** and **samiti**.
	Aryan Tribal Structure	Kinship-based social structure with emphasis on pastoral economy.
	Rig Veda Composition	Composition of the Rig Veda, consisting of hymns dedicated to various deities.
	Rig Vedic Gods (Early Vedic)	Worship of gods like **Indra, Agni, and Varuna**; hymns and sacrifices as forms of worship.
Late 1500 BC	**Aryan Social Divisions**	Formation of social divisions based on occupation and later, the emergence of the **Varna system**.
Circa 1000 BC - 600 BC	**Later Vedic Period**	Expansion of Vedic culture and compilation of post-Rig Vedic texts **(Parts of other 3 Vedas, Samhitas, Brahmanas etc.)**.
	Socio-political Changes	Formation of larger kingdoms; decline in the importance of tribal assemblies; increase in royal power.
	Settlement Expansion	Expansion of Vedic people into the upper **Gangetic** basin; encounters with various indigenous cultures.
	Iron Age: Use and Settlements	The Emergence of the Iron Age in India was marked by the use of iron implements and the development of agrarian societies.
		Introduction of iron in the **Gandhara** area and its spread to eastern **Punjab**, western **Uttar Pradesh**, and **Rajasthan**.
	Agricultural Development	Increased emphasis on agriculture; possible use of iron in agriculture.
	Social Structure	Emergence of a varna-divided society; distinctions between brahmanas, kshatriyas, vaisyas, and sudras.
	Political Organisation	Development of territorial kingdoms; emergence of powerful kings performing major Vedic sacrifices.
	Material Culture	Use of **Painted Grey Ware (PGW)**; development in pottery, weaving, leather work, and carpentry.
	Religious Practices	Changes in religious practices; prominence of **Prajapati, Rudra, Vishnu**; increase in ritual sacrifices.

Date/Century	Category	Event Description
	Philosophical Developments	Compilation of **Upanishads**; philosophical shift towards the concept of **Atma** and **Brahma**.
	Emergence of Towns	Beginnings of town formation, particularly in places like **Hastinapur** and **Kausambi**.
Circa 1000 BC	**Megalithic Culture**	Beginning of the Megalithic phase; prevalent in eastern **Andhra** and **Tamil Nadu**.
6th Century BC	**Jainism and Buddhism**	Emergence of Jainism and Buddhism as major religious reform movements.
	Expansion of Jainism	Jainism spread to south and west India, especially during a great famine in **Magadha**.
	Formation of States	Widespread use of iron in Eastern **Uttar Pradesh** and Western **Bihar**, leading to the formation of large territorial states.
	Mahajanapadas	Emergence of 16 large states called Mahajanapadas, including Magadha, Kosala, Vatsa, and Avanti.
	Rise of Magadha	Under the Haryanka dynasty, Magadha became a prominent power. Bimbisara's leadership marks the beginning of territorial expansion.
	Magadhan Capital	Udayin established Patna **(Pataliputra)** as the new capital of Magadha, fortifying its strategic location.
	Material Life	Emergence of towns in the middle Gangetic basin, houses mostly made of mud-brick and wood, increase in population.
	Urbanisation	Second urbanisation begins with the NBP phase; towns like Kausambi, Sravasti, Ayodhya, Varanasi, etc., show signs of habitation.
	Economic Development	Use of iron implements in crafts and agriculture; beginning of metallic money and use of **burnt bricks** and **ringwells**.
	Trade and Commerce	Growth of trade facilitated by river routes and use of money; emergence of specialised **crafts** and **guilds**.
	Agriculture	Advancements in agriculture with iron ploughshares; production of rice, barley, pulses, cotton, and sugarcane.
	Administrative System	Emergence of powerful states like Kosala and Magadha with hereditary monarchies and efficient administrative systems.
	Army and Taxation	Formation of large professional armies; taxation primarily on peasants and traders.
	Republican Systems	Existence of republics with oligarchic assemblies, like the Sakyas and Lichchhavis, distinct from monarchies.
	Social Orders and Legislation	Division of society into four varnas with specific duties; legal system based on varna division and emphasis on caste laws.
	Civil and Criminal Law	Administration of civil and criminal law by royal agents with severe punishments for offences.
	Rural and Urban Economy	Advanced food-producing economy supporting non-agriculturists and leading to formation of large territorial states.
	Factors for Success	Magadha's success is attributed to its fertile location, strategic capitals, innovative use of elephants in warfare, and a dynamic societal structure.

Date/Century	Category	Event Description
6th Century BC onwards	Spread of Buddhism	Buddhism gains prominence and spreads across various regions of India and into neighboring countries.
516 BC	Iranian Invasion	Darius of Iran invades northwest India, annexing Punjab and Sindh, and incorporating them into the Achaemenian Empire.
	Annexation by a Foreign Empire	Darius annexed the most fertile and populous regions of India, including **Sindh** and parts of **Punjab**, into the **20th satrapy** of the Iranian empire.
516 BC - 4th Century BC	Indo-Iranian Contact	Indo-Iranian contact persisted, fostering trade, cultural exchanges, and the introduction of **Kharosthi** script in northwest India.
483 BC	Mahavira's Demise	Death of Mahavira at **Pavapuri** near modern **Rajgir.**
	Buddha's Demise	Death of Gautama Buddha at **Kushinagar** (modern Kasia in **Deoria** district, Uttar Pradesh).
Circa 460 - 444 BC	Ajatasatru's Reign	Ajatasatru expands Magadha by conquering **Kasi** and **Vaishali**. He continued the aggressive expansionist policy.
5th - 1st Century BC	Megalithic Developments	Prolonged Megalithic phase in the region, with reliance on iron and partly on agriculture.
4th Century BC	Decline of Magadha	Eventual decline of Magadha and the rise of the Mauryan Empire, which built upon Magadha's foundations.
Circa 4th Century BC	Nanda Dynasty	The Nanda dynasty rose to power in Magadha, further expanding the empire to regions like Kalinga.
326 - 325 BC	Alexander's Indian Campaign	Alexander of Macedonia invades India, attracted by its wealth and strategic location.
		Alexander conquered numerous small principalities in northwest India and faced resistance from rulers like **Ambhi** and **Porus**.
		Alexander spent 19 months in India, with extensive fighting and conquests, but faced resistance from his own troops against further eastward expansion.
		The Nandas' power deterred Alexander the Great from advancing into their territory.
	Alexander's Administration	Alexander established Greek administrative systems in conquered territories and set up new cities.
	Cultural and Economic Impact	Alexander's invasion led to increased trade, cultural exchanges, and influences Indian art, language, and chronology.
	Geographical Impact	The invasion opened up land and sea routes between **India** and **Greece**, boosting trade and interactions.
	Political Impact	The invasion disrupted the political landscape of northwest India, paving the way for the rise of the Mauryan Empire.
321-297 BC	Chandragupta Maurya's Reign	Founding of the **Maurya dynasty** by **Chandragupta Maurya**; liberation of north-western India from **Seleucus**; establishment of a vast empire.
	Imperial Organization	Establishment of a centralised and elaborate administrative system by Chandragupta Maurya.
	Financial Administration	Introduction of an efficient fiscal system with state control over key economic activities and collection of taxes from peasants.
273-232 BC	Asoka's Reign	Asoka becomes the greatest Maurya ruler, renowned for his conversion to Buddhism and propagation of Dhamma.
	Asoka's Inscriptions	Dissemination of Asoka's policies and teachings through inscriptions across the empire and beyond.
	Asoka's Domestic Policy	Implementation of Buddhist principles in administration; promotion of social welfare and public works.

Date/Century	Category	Event Description
	Asoka's Foreign Policy	Asoka practised pacifist and non-aggressive foreign policy, including sending out Buddhist missionaries (to Sri Lanka among others)
	Cultural and Religious Impact	Spread of Buddhism within and outside India, influenced by Asoka's patronage and missionary activities.
	Decline of Mauryan Empire	Post-Asoka decline of the Mauryan Empire due to lack of continuity in Asoka's policies and internal strife.
	Early Kingdoms	Asokan inscriptions mention the **Cholas, Pandyas, and Cheras** in the southern peninsula.
261 BC	**Kalinga War**	Asoka's conquest of **Kalinga**, leading to a transformation in his approach towards governance and adoption of non-violence.
Circa 200 BC	**Beginning of Contacts**	Start of widespread contacts between Central Asia and India following the decline of the Mauryan Empire. Rise of smaller native dynasties.
200 BC onwards	**Indo-Greek Invasions**	Bactrian Greeks invaded India, leading to Indo-Greek rule in northwestern India. Notable Indo-Greek ruler: **Menander (Milinda)** reigned c.165/155 –130 BC.
	Shakas/scythian	The Greeks were followed by the Shakas, who controlled a much larger part of India than the Greeks.
	Parthians	In the mid 1st century CE, the Shakas' domination in northwest India was followed by that of the Parthians.
	Kushanas	The Parthians were followed by the Kushanas who were also called Yue-Chis (moon tribe) or Tocharians.the most famous Kushan ruler was **Kanishka** (78 CE-105 CE).
Post-Mauryan Period (200 BC - 4th Century AD)	**Cultural Impact**	Introduction of **Hellenistic** art, development of **Gandhara** art, and spread of **Mahayana Buddhism** in India.
	Economic Impact	Increased trade with **Central Asia** and the **Roman Empire**; introduction of new coinage; control of **Silk Route** by **Kushans**.
	Technological Advances	Introduction of advanced cavalry and riding techniques; technological advancement influenced by Rome.
	Art and Literature	Development in Buddhist art and construction of caves; patronage of Sanskrit literature by foreign rulers.
	Science and Technology	Influence on Indian astronomy and astrology; advancements in medicine, botany, and chemistry.
Post-Mauryan Period (200 BC - 200 AD)	**Crafts**	Significant growth in various crafts including iron and metal work, cloth-making, silk-weaving, ivory work, glass manufacture, bead cutting, coin-minting, pottery, and terracotta. Traders organised into guilds.
	Trade	Thriving trade between **India** and the eastern **Roman empire**, with significant exports of spices, muslin, pearls, jewels, and iron goods. Import of Roman coins. Shift to sea trade due to monsoon discovery. Transit trade in silk from **China**.
	Prosperous Towns	Flourishing of towns in north India and the **Saka** kingdom due to growing crafts, commerce, and use of money. Prosperous towns include **Vaishali, Pataliputra, Varanasi, Mathura, Ujjain**, and others. Decline of towns post-third century AD.
Circa 58 BC	**Saka Resistance**	A king in Ujjain resists the Sakas, leading to the start of the **Vikrama** era.

Date/Century	Category	Event Description
1st Century BC	Rise of the Satavahanas	Defeat of the Kanvas by early Satavahanas, establishing power in parts of central India. **Simuka(100-70 BC)**, the founder of the Satavahana Dynasty.
	Initial Satavahana Power	Early Satavahana kings appear in **Maharashtra**; inscriptions predominantly found there. **Gautamiputra Satkarni: The Resurgent Ruler (c. 106–130 CE)**
1st Century BC - 2nd Century AD	Expansion	Satavahanas expand over Karnataka and Andhra, facing competition from the Sakas.
1st Century BC - Early Years of Current Era (CE/AD)	Transition towards Agri-Regions	Shift from uplands to fertile river basins and deltaic areas; adoption of plough agriculture.
1st Century BC - 1st Century AD	Saka Rule	Sakas established branches in different parts of India, including **Mathura** and western India.
Early Years of Current Era (CE/AD)	Sociopolitical Developments	Formation of state systems, rise of social classes, use of writing in Tamil regions.
Circa 106 - 130 AD	Brahmanism Influence	Introduction and rise of Brahmanism, Vedic practices in **Tamil** society.
Circa 130 - 154 AD	Tamil Language and Literature	Development of Tamil language; compilation of **Sangam** literature under royal patronage.
56 AD	Settlement/ Colonisation	Indian colonies established in **Java, Indonesia.**
1st Century AD	Parthian Rule	Parthians from Iran rule small portions of northwestern India.
1st - 2nd Century AD	Pandya Kingdom	Pandyas gain wealth through trade with the Roman Empire; perform Vedic sacrifices.
1st - 2nd Century AD	Kushan Empire	Kushans from Central Asia established an empire covering parts of Central Asia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and northern India. Kanishka, a prominent Kushan ruler, patronises Buddhism.
1st - 2nd Century AD	Material Culture Developments	Introduction of burnt bricks, ringwells, and other architectural advancements in the Deccan.
	Economic and Social Developments	Advances in iron use, agriculture, and introduction of coinage in the Deccan.
	Religious and Cultural Influence	Rise of Buddhism in the Satavahana realm; patronage of Brahmanism and Vaishnavism.
	Architectural Achievements	Development of rock-cut architecture, including chaityas (temples) and viharas (monasteries) in Maharashtra.
	Literary Contributions	Use of **Prakrit** language in inscriptions; Prakrit literature flourishes under **Satavahana** patronage.
1st Century AD	Rise of Cheras	Cheras became prominent in trade with **Romans**; set up two regiments at **Muziris** for protection of interests.
1st Century AD	Trade and Settlement	Indian traders and settlers establish colonies in **Burma**.
1st Century AD	Cultural/Religious Exchange	Buddhism spreads to **Burma** from India.
1st - 3rd Century AD	Missionary Activities	Indian missionaries spread **Buddhism to China, Central Asia**, and **Afghanistan** during **Kanishka's** reign.
1st - 7th Century AD	Cultural/Religious Exchange	Buddhism influences Afghanistan with monasteries and Buddha statues.
Circa 100 AD	Chola Kingdom	Reign of Chola King **Karikala**; emphasis on trade and establishment of Puhar.
Circa 130 - 150 AD	Saka Conflicts	**Rudradaman I**, a Saka ruler, defeats the Satavahanas but does not annihilate them due to matrimonial ties.

Date/Century	Category	Event Description
Circa 150 AD	Chola-Chera Conflict	Major conflict between the **Cholas** and **Cheras**, resulting in temporary alliances and eventual Chera decline.
Circa 165 - 194 AD	Reign of Yajna Sri Satakarni	Recovers lost territories from the Saka rulers. Promotes trade and navigation.
Post 220 AD	Decline of Satavahanas	Gradual decline post the reign of Satavahana successors.
3rd-4th Century AD	Social Crisis	Crisis in the **varna** system, as noted in Puranic passages, leading to social instability.
3rd - 4th Century AD	Kushan Decline	Decline of the Kushan Empire, overtaken by Sassanian power in Iran and surrounding regions.
3rd Century AD	Background	End of Kushan power in North India around AD 230. **Murundas** rule was followed by the rise of the **Gupta dynasty** around AD 275.
Gupta Age (3rd-6th Century AD)	System of Administration & Decline of Trade	Gupta kings adopted grand titles, indicating rule over lesser kings. Feudal system evident. Administration was less elaborate than Mauryas. **Land grants** to **brahmanas** and **administrators** were common, leading to the rise of priestly landlords and decline in trade.
	Social and Religious Developments	Proliferation of castes, slight improvement in the position of sudras and women. Brahmanism prominent, with **Vishnu** and **Shiva** as chief deities. Buddhism did not receive royal patronage. Emergence of **idol worship** in **Hinduism**.
	Art and Literature	Golden Age of art and literature. Religious-inspired art, particularly Buddhist, flourished. Significant works by **Kalidasa**. Development in Sanskrit literature and grammar.
	Science and Technology	Advances in mathematics (**Aryabhatiya by Aryabhatta**) and astronomy. Skill in iron and bronze work, exemplified by the Iron Pillar in Delhi.
300-750 AD	Formation of New States	Rise of states like **Pallavas** (Tondainadu), Chalukyas (western Deccan), Pandyas (Tamil Nadu), Kadambas (northern Karnataka), and Western Gangas. Notable for conflicts especially between Pallavas and Chalukyas.
	Rural Expansion & Economy	Significant agrarian expansion with increased land grants to Brahmanas and decline in Buddhism and Jainism. Shift from a trade and coinage economy to a more rural-based economy with heavy taxation and labour demands on peasantry.
	Social Structure & Culture	Dominance of society by princes (often claiming descent from ancient dynasties) and Brahmanas (gaining influence through land grants). Rise in Brahmanism, construction of Hindu temples, and shift from Prakrit to Sanskrit as the official language. Advent of temple architecture under Pallavas and Chalukyas marked a significant cultural development. Peasantry constituted the majority, essential for agricultural production and services.
AD 319-20	Background	Chandragupta I, first important Gupta king, starts the Gupta era marking his accession. Marriage alliances strengthen the kingdom.
AD 335-380	Samudragupta's Reign	Samudragupta expanded the Gupta Empire significantly. Known for military conquests and expansion in various regions including the **Ganga-Yamuna doab**, eastern **Himalayan** states, and south India.
AD 380-412	Chandragupta II's Reign	Chandragupta II further extends the Gupta Empire through conquests and marital alliances. Flourishing of arts and scholarship during his reign.

Date/Century	Category	Event Description
Gupta Age (4th-7th Century AD)	Orissa & Eastern/Southern Madhya Pradesh	**Kalinga** (coastal Orissa) experienced state formation and brisk trade. Sanskrit and writing spread throughout Orissa, indicating cultural development.
	Bengal	North Bengal demonstrated early civilization with settlements, writing, and **Buddhism**. South-East Bengal saw the emergence of states in the 7th century.
	Assam (Kamarupa)	Kamarupa in Assam emerged prominently in the 7th century, with prior settlements from the 4th century. Sanskrit and writing were prevalent, and state systems developed.
	Eastern India	Eastern India, including Bengal and Assam, witnessed substantial advancements marked by rural economic development, state systems, social classes, Sanskrit, and Vedic rituals.
Post AD 467	Fall of the Empire	Decline of the Gupta Empire due to Hunas invasion, loss of western territories, and reduced economic power. The empire's glory ended significantly earlier than its official end.
	Origin of Land Grants	Frequent land grants to priests and officials, shifting economic and political power dynamics.
5th-6th Century AD	Cultural Influence	**Fa-hsien** visited **Java**, and found Brahmanical religion prevalent.
	Decline of Central Control	Erosion of royal authority due to extensive land grants, creating self-sufficient feudal estates.
	Changes in Varna System	Introduction of new social classes and castes, reflecting changing economic and social realities.
	Tantricism Emergence	Tantricism arises as a major religious force, influenced by the inclusion of tribal practices.
	Decline of Trade and Towns	Decline of external trade leads to the decay of urban centres and a shift towards agrarian economies.
	Social Organization Changes	Shift from free peasant vaisyas to a more feudal structure with landlords and tenant farmers.
	State Formation/Cultural Exchange	Indianized kingdoms form in **Kamboja** and **Champa** (modern **Kampuchea** and Vietnam).
6th-7th Century AD	New Agrarian Economy	Emergence of new agrarian practices and rural expansion.
Circa 600 AD	Compilation of Sangam Literature	Final compilation of **Sangam** texts, providing insights into early Tamil culture and history.
606-647 AD	Prominence of Nalanda University	Nalanda became a prominent Buddhist university, supported by **Harsha**.
	Harsha's Religious Policy	Harsha shows religious tolerance, shifting from Saivism to Buddhism; organises assembly at Prayag.
	Harsha's Kingdom	Harsha's reign marks the unification of North and Western India. **Kannauj** rises as a political centre.
		Decline of **Pataliputra; Hunas** dominate **Kashmir, Punjab**, and Western India.
		Harsha's control extends over Rajasthan, UP, Bihar, Orissa, influencing even more regions.
	Administration	Administration becomes more **feudal** and **decentralised**; land grants to priests and officials.
629-645 AD	Hsuan Tsang's Visit	Chinese pilgrim Hsuan Tsang's visit offers insights into the economic, social, and religious life.
		Descriptions of **Prayag, Kanauj**, and decline of **Pataliputra**; evidence of Buddhism's influence.

Date/Century	Category	Event Description
7th Century AD	**Social Structure Evolution**	Development of sub-national units and regional languages due to reduced central control.
	Cultural Developments	Growth of regional scripts and languages, decline in pan-Indian script uniformity.
	Spread of Bhakti and Tantricism	Emergence of the Bhakti movement and spread of Tantric practices in various religious traditions.
	Religious Hierarchy	Development of a hierarchical structure in Hindu divinities, paralleling social stratification.
8th Century AD	**Architectural Influence**	Construction of **Borobudur**, the largest Buddhist temple, in Indonesia.
8th - 13th Century AD	**Trade and Settlement**	Continuation of Indian settlements in the **Indian Ocean** region.
12th Century AD	**Decline of Buddhism in India**	Gradual disappearance of Buddhism from India, with its survival in different forms in East Asia.
1921	**Harappan Discovery**	Discovery of the evidences of Harappan Civilization at Harappa in West Punjab, Pakistan.

₹349/-

PHYSICS WALLAH PUBLICATION

PW APP

PW IAS WEB

www.pw.live
www.pwonlyias.com

Talk to our Counselor give a
Missed Call on: +91-9920613613

ISBN 978-93-6034-023-0